DANGEROUS CONNECTIONS:

OR,

LETTERS

COLLECTED IN A SOCIETY,

AND

PUBLISHED FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF OTHER SOCIETIES.

BY M. C**** DE L***.

I have observed the Manners of the Times, and have wrote those Letters.

J. J. ROUSSEAU. Pref. to the New Eloise.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. HOOKHAM,

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M.DCC.LXXXIV.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

DANGEROUS

CONNECTIONS.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to the Viscount de* VALMONT.

ALTHOUGH I have the greatest pleasure in receiving the Chevalier Danceny's letters, and I wish as ardently as he does, we might see each other without interruption, yet I dare not venture to do what you propose. First, I think it too dangerous; the

the key you desire I should put in the place of the other resembles it pretty much, it is true: but still there is some difference, and mama is so exceedingly watchful, that nothing escapes her; besides, though it has not been used since we came here, an accident might happen, and if it was missed, I should be ruined for ever. Moreover, it would be very wrong to have a double key; that would be too much: it is true, you would take the management of it yourself; but yet if it should come to be known, all the reproach would fall on me, as it would be done for me; not that there is any difficulty in the matter, and I twice had a mind to take it, but something came over me, and I was seized with such a tremor, my resolution failed me. I believe, then, we had better remain as we are.

If you will be so good to continue your friendship as you have done hitherto,

therto, you will always find an opportunity to deliver me a letter. Even the last I should have had very readily, had it not been for the accident of your turning about so suddenly. I am very sensible, you cannot be always taken up with those matters as I am: but I would rather have a little patience than run such risks. I am certain Mr. Danceny would be of the same opinion: for whenever he wanted any thing I was not inclined to, he instantly gave it up.

You will find, Sir, with this letter, your own, Mr. Danceny's, and your key. I am, nevertheless, extremely obliged to you for your kindness, which I entreat you to continue to me. I am, indeed, very miserable, and should be much more so, were it not for you: but she is my mother, and I must have patience; and provided Mr. Danceny will always love me,

me, and you do not desert me, I may yet, perhaps, be happy.

I have the honour to be,
with the utmost gratitude,
SIR,
your must humble and
obedient servant.

Sept. 26, 17—.

LETTER LXXXIX.

The Viscount de VALMONT *to the Chevalier* DANCENY.

IF your affairs do not go on quite so rapidly as you wish, my dear friend, it is not altogether my fault. I have many obstacles to encounter here. Madame de Volanges' vigilance and severity are not the only ones; your young friend also throws some in my way. Whether it proceeds from cold-
ness,

neſs, or timidity, ſhe will not always do what I adviſe her; and yet I think I ſhould know better than ſhe what is proper to be done.

I had propoſed an eaſy, commodious, and ſafe way of delivering your letters to her, and even to ſmooth the way of the interviews you wiſh for ſo much; but I have not been able to determine her to make uſe of it. This gives me the more concern, as I can't think of any other means of bringing you together; and I am even inceſſantly terrified at the danger we all three are expoſed to on account of your correſpondence; you may then very well imagine, I do not chuſe to riſk myſelf, nor expoſe you both to it.

Still it would give me the greateſt uneaſineſs, that your little friend's want of confidence in me ſhould deprive me of the pleaſure of being uſeful to you; I think you would do well to write to her on the ſubject.

Act as you think proper; you are to determine; for it is not enough that we serve our friends: we must serve them in the manner the most pleasing to themselves. It might be also one other means of ascertaining the degree of her affection for you; for the woman who retains a will of her own, does not love to that degree she ought. Not that I have any suspicion of her constancy: but she is very young; she is in great awe of her mother, who you already know to be your enemy; therefore it might be dangerous to suffer her to wain her mind from you: however, I would not have you make yourself in the least uneasy, as it is the solicitude of friendship only, and not any diffidence whatever, that makes me so explicit.

I must break off, as I have some important matters of my own to attend. I am not so far advanced as you are: but my passion is as ardent;

that

that is my consolation. And was I to be unsuccessful in my own, it would be a pleasure to think, my time has been well employed if I can be useful in your's. Adieu, my dear friend!

Castle of —,
Sept. 26, 17—.

LETTER XC.

The Presidente de TOURVEL *to the Viscount de* VALMONT.

I Much wish, Sir, this letter may not give you uneasiness; or, if it should, I hope it will be alleviated by that which I confess I now experience in writing to you. You should, I think, by this time be sufficiently acquainted with my sentiments, to be assured I would not willingly afflict you; and flatter myself, you are incapable of

making me for ever miſerable. I beſeech you, then, by the tender friendſhip I have profeſſed, and thoſe ſofter ſentiments, and more ſincere than any you have for me, let us no longer ſee one another. Leave me; and until then, let us avoid particularly thoſe dangerous converſations, when by an unaccountable attraction I am loſt in attending to what I ought not to liſten to, and forget what I intend to ſay.

When you joined company with me in the park yeſterday, I fully intended telling you what I am now about to write. What was the conſequence? Why to be totally engaged on a ſubject to which I ought never to liſten; your love. For heaven's ſake! depart from me. Fear not that abſence ſhould alter my ſentiments for you; for how can I poſſibly overcome them, when I am no longer able to contend with them. You ſee I confeſs my weakneſs, and I dread leſs to own it

than I do to yield to it: but the command I have loſt over my mind, I will ſtill preſerve over my actions; this I am determined on, were it at the expence of life.

Alas! the time is not very diſtant, that I imagined myſelf proof againſt ſuch temptations. I felicitated myſelf on it, I fear, too much; I was, perhaps, too vain of it; and Heaven has puniſhed, and cruelly puniſhed, that pride: but all-merciful, even in the hour in which it ſtrikes us, it warns me again before an utter fall; and I ſhould be doubly guilty, if, being ſenſible of my weakneſs, I ſhould abandon my prudence.

You have often told me, you would not deſire a happineſs purchaſed at the expence of my tears. Let us no longer talk of happineſs; let me, at leaſt, regain ſome degree of tranquillity.

 In

In acceding to my request, what fresh claims will you not acquire over my heart, and those founded upon virtue! How I shall enjoy my gratitude! I shall owe to you the happiness of entertaining, without any remorse, a sentiment of the most delicious kind. Now, on the contrary, startled at my sentiments and my thoughts, I am equally afraid of occupying my mind either with you or myself. The very idea of you terrifies me. When I cannot fly from it, I combat it. I do not banish it, but repulse it.

Is it not better for us to terminate this state of trouble and anxiety? You, whose tender heart has even in the midst of errors remained the friend of virtue, you will attend to my distressed situation; you will not reject my prayer. A milder but as tender an attachment will succeed these violent agitations. Then regaining my existence

existence through your beneficence, I will cherish that existence, and will say in the joy of my heart, the calm I now feel I owe to my friend.

By submitting to some slight privations, which I do not impose upon you, but intreat you to yield to, will you think a termination of my sufferings too dearly purchased? Ah! if to render you happy, there was only my own consent that I should be unhappy, you may rely on it, I should not hesitate a moment: but to become criminal! no, my friend, I shall prefer a thousand deaths.

Even now, assailed by shame, and on the eve of remorse, I dread all others and myself equally. I blush when in any circle, and feel a horror when in solitude. I no longer lead any but a life of grief. I can only re-establish my tranquillity by your consent; my most laudable resolutions are insufficient to afford me security. I have

formed the resolution I have just mentioned no longer than yesterday, and yet have passed the last night in tears.

Behold your friend, her whom you love, confounded, and supplicating you for the preservation of her repose and her innocence. Oh, heaven! would she ever but through your means have been reduced to make such humiliating entreaties! I, however, do not reproach you with any thing. I feel too sensibly, from the experience of myself, how difficult it is to resist so over-ruling a sentiment. A lamentation such as mine ought not to be deemed a murmur. Do, from generosity what I do from duty; and to all the sentiments you have inspired me with, I shall add that of eternal gratitude. Adieu, adieu, Sir!

From ——,
Sept. 27, 17—.

LETTER XCI.

Viscount de VALMONT *to the Presidente de* TOURVEL.

PLUNGED into consternation as I am by your letter, how shall I answer it, Madam? Doubtless, if the alternative is your unhappiness or mine, it is my duty to sacrifice myself, and I do not hesitate to do it: but concerns so interesting, merit, I think, full discussion and elucidation; and how shall we arrive at that, if we are no longer to see or speak to one another.

What! whilst the most tender sentiments unite us, shall a vain terror be able to separate us, perhaps, for ever! Shall tender friendship and ardent love in vain endeavour to assert their rights, and their voices remain

unattended to! And why? What is this very urgent danger which threatens you? Ah! believe me, ſuch fears, and fears taken up ſo lightly, are in themſelves ſufficiently powerful motives for your conſidering yourſelf in a ſtate of ſecurity.

Permit me to tell you, I can here trace again the unfavourable impreſſions which have been made upon you with regard to me. No woman trembles at the man ſhe eſteems. No woman baniſhes him in a marked manner, whom ſhe has thought worthy of ſome degree of friendſhip. It is the dangerous man who is feared and fled.

And yet, was there ever a perſon more reſpectful and ſubmiſſive than I? You muſt perceive it. Guarded in my language, I no longer permit myſelf thoſe appellations ſo ſweet, ſo dear to my heart, and which that heart unceaſingly applies to you ſecretly. It

is

is no longer the faithful and unfortunate lover receiving the advice and consolation of a tender and feeling female friend. I am in the situation of the accused before his judge, of the slave before his lord. These new titles certainly impose on me duties: I bind myself to fulfil them all. Hear me, and if you condemn me, I subscribe to my sentence and depart. I will go farther. Do you prefer that despotism which decides without a hearing? Do you feel boldness enough to commit an act of injustice? Give your orders; you shall be obeyed.

But let me have this sentence or order from your mouth. But why? You will tell me in your turn. Ah! if you put such a question, you are a stranger to love and to my heart. Is it nothing to see you? I repeat it again. Even when you shall strike despair to my soul, perhaps a consoling glance will prevent its sinking. In a word; if I must

must renounce love and friendship, the only props of my existence, at least you will behold your works, and I shall engage your compassion. Though I should not even deserve this small favour, I think I submit to pay dearly enough for it, to give me hopes of obtaining it. What, you are about to banish me from you! You can consent, then, that we should become utter strangers to one another! What do I say? It is the wish of your heart; and whilst you assure me that my absence shall not prejudice me in your sentiments, you only hasten my departure, in order more securely to effect their destruction, which you begin even now, by talking of substituting gratitude in their place. Thus you offer me only that sentiment which a stranger would inspire you with for a slight service; that kind of sentiment which you would feel for an enemy desisting from premeditated injury;

injury; and you expect my heart to be content with this. Interrogate your own. If a lover, a friend, ſhould ever come to talk to you of gratitude, would you not ſay to him with indignation, Withdraw, you are a worthleſs man?

I ſhall here ſtop, and repeat my requeſts of your indulgence. Pardon the expreſſions of grief of which you are the cauſe; they ſhall not interfere with my perfect ſubmiſſion: but I conjure you in turn, in the name of thoſe tender ſentiments which you yourſelf reſort to with me, refuſe not to hear; and from mere compaſſion for the aggravated diſtreſs you have plunged me in, defer not the moment in which you will condeſcend to hear me. Adieu, Madam!

From ——,
Sept. 7, 17—, at night.

LETTER XCII.

Chevalier DANCENY *to the Viscount de* VALMONT.

YOUR letter, my dear friend, has overwhelmed me with sorrow. Heavens! Is it possible Cecilia no longer loves her Danceny! Yes, I plainly see it through the veil your friendship has thrown over it. You wished to prepare me for this mortal stab; I thank you for your care: but a lover is not thus to be deceived; he anticipates his concerns; he is not to learn his fate, he presages it. I have no longer any doubt of mine. I entreat you to inform me, without evasion, from whence your suspicions arise, and what confirms them; the most minute trifles are important. Recol-

 lect

lect particularly her expressions. A word may alter a phrase, or bear a double meaning. You may have mistaken her.

Alas, I endeavour still to flatter myself. What did she say? Has she any thing to reproach me with? Does she not attempt to excuse herself? I might have foreseen this alteration by all the difficulties she has lately started. Love admits no obstacles.

What am I to do? What would you advise me to? Is it then impossible to see her? Absence is such a dreadful, such a fatal — and she refuses the means you proposed to see me! You don't, however, tell me what it was; if it really was dangerous, she is convinced I would not have her run a great risk: however, I am satisfied of your prudence, and pay no regard to any other consideration.

What

What will now become of me? How ſhall I write to her? If I hint my ſuſpicions, ſhe will probably be grieved; and ſhould they be ill grounded, how ſhall I ever forgive myſelf for having given her cauſe for affliction? If I conceal them, it is deceiving her, and I cannot diſſemble it.

Oh! could ſhe but know what I ſuffer, my diſtreſs would move her, for ſhe is tender, has a moſt excellent heart, and I have a thouſand proofs of her affection. Too much timidity, ſome diſtreſs, ſhe is young, and her mother treats her ſo ſeverely. I will write to her; yet I will contain myſelf, and will only beg of her to leave the management of every thing to you. If ſhe ſhould even ſtill refuſe, ſhe cannot at leaſt be angry with me, and perhaps ſhe may conſent.

I beg ten thouſand pardons, my dear friend, both for her and myſelf.

Give

Give me leave to assure you, she is very sensible of the trouble you have had, and is exceedingly grateful. It is not distrust, it is merely timidity. Have a little compassion for her weakness, the highest attribute of friendship. Your's to me is inestimable, and I am really at a loss how to express my gratitude. Adieu! I am just going to write to her.

All my fears return on me. I could not have believed yesterday, when it would have been my greatest happiness, that I should now experience so much distress in writing to her.

Adieu, my dear friend! continue your friendship, and compassionate me.

Paris, Sept. 27, 17—.

LETTER XCIII.

Chevalier DANCENY *to* CECILIA VOLANGES.

I CANNOT conceal my affliction at hearing from Valmont how much you still distrust him. You know he is my friend, and the only person who can give us an opportunity of seeing each other: I fondly imagined this would have been a sufficient recommendation, but am very sorry to find I am mistaken. May I, however, hope to know your reasons? There are, perhaps, some obstacles that prevent you; I cannot, however, without your aid, guess at this mysterious conduct. I dare not entertain any suspicion of your affection, neither would you deceive mine. Ah, Cecilia!

It

It is, then, paſt a doubt, that you have refuſed *an eaſy, commodious, and ſafe way* * of ſeeing me. And is it thus I am beloved? Has ſo ſhort an abſence altered your ſentiments? — Why, then, deceive me? Why tell me you ſtill love me, and even ſtill more? Has your mama, by deſtroying your affection for me, alſo deſtroyed your candour? If, however, ſhe has not left you deſtitute of compaſſion, you will feel for the pangs you occaſion me, which death cannot even equal.

Tell me, then, have I for ever loſt your heart? Am I totally forgotten? I know not when you will hear my complaints, nor when they will be anſwered. Valmont's friendſhip had ſecured our correſpondence, but you rejected it; you thought it trouble-

* Danceny does not know the way; he only repeats Valmont's expreſſion.

ſome; it was too frequent. Never more will I confide in love or in promiſes. Who is to be believed, when Cecilia deceives me?

Am I no longer, then, your beloved Danceny? No, that is not poſſible; you deceive your own heart. A tranſitory apprehenſion, a momentary gloom, cauſes my preſent diſtreſs, which love will ſoon diſpel: is it not ſo, my adorable Cecilia? Yes, it is, and I am much to blame for accuſing you. How happy ſhall I be to diſcover my error, and repair it by ſoothing apologies and never-ending love.

Cecilia, lovely Cecilia, take pity on me; conſent to ſee me; form the plan yourſelf: this is the conſequence of abſence; fears, doubts, and perhaps coolneſs. One ſingle glance, a word only, and we ſhall be happy. But why mention happineſs? Mine is, perhaps, at an end, and that for ever.

Tortured with apprehensions, suspended between doubts and fears, I cannot form a resolution. My existence depends on love and sufferings: You alone, my Cecilia, are the arbitress of my fate; you alone can decide on my happiness or misery.

Paris, Sept. 27, 17—

LETTER XCIV.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to the Chevalier* DANCENY.

I CANNOT conceive a word of your letter, —— it gives me much uneasiness. What, then, has M. de Valmont wrote to you? Can you think I no longer love you? Perhaps it would be much better for me if it was otherwise, for I should not be so tormented as I am; it is really hard,

that, loving as I do, you ſhould always think me wrong; and instead of receiving conſolation in my afflictions, the cauſe of all my troubles ſhould proceed from you. You imagine I deceive and miſrepreſent matters to you. Upon my word you have a good opinion of me: But even ſuppoſe it the caſe, what would it avail me? Certainly, if I ceas'd loving you, all my friends would be glad of it; but it is my misfortune I cannot, and muſt love a man who is not in the leaſt obliged to me.

What have I done, then, to put you ſo much out of temper? I was afraid to take a key, leſt my mama ſhould diſcover it, and bring more trouble on you and me; moreover, I did not think it right. How did I know whether I was acting right or wrong, as you knew nothing of the matter, and it was Mr. Valmont only that mentioned it? Now that I know

you

you would wiſh me to do it, I will take it to-morrow; then, I ſuppoſe, you will be ſatisfied. — Mr. de Valmont may be your friend, for ought I know, but I think I love you as well as he does, at leaſt; and yet he is always right, and I am wrong. — I aſſure you, I am very angry; however, that gives you no great uneaſineſs, as you know I am ſoon pacified: when I have the key, I can ſee you whenever I pleaſe: if you behave in this manner, though, I will not wiſh for it; I can better bear my own troubles than thoſe you bring on me.

We might be happy ſtill, only for the little diſagreeable occurrences thrown in our way; if I was my own miſtreſs, you would have no reaſon to complain: But, if you will not believe me, we ſhall always be very miſerable; yet it ſhall not be my fault. I hope we ſhall ſoon ſee each other, and then ſhall have no reaſon to be ſo tormented as we are now.

Could I have foreseen all this, the key should have been in my possession; but, indeed, I thought I was doing right. Do not be angry with me, I beg of you. Don't afflict yourself any more, and love me as much as I love you; then I shall be happy. Adieu, my dear friend.

From the castle of ——,
Sept. 28, 17—.

LETTER XCV.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to the Viscount de* VALMONT.

SIR,

I BEG you will return me the key you gave me to put in the place of the other; since it must be so, I must agree to it.

I don't

I don't know why you ſhould write to Mr. Danceny, I did not love him: I don't think I ever gave you any reaſon to ſay ſo; it has given us both a great deal of uneaſineſs: — I know you have a friendſhip for him, therefore ſhould not fret him nor me neither. I ſhould be much obliged to you if, when you write to him next, you would aſſure him of the contrary; for he repoſes his confidence in you: nothing gives me ſo much trouble as not to be believed when I ſay a thing.

As to the key, you may make yourſelf perfectly eaſy; I remember all you wrote me very well; but if you have your letter ſtill by you, and will give it to me at the ſame time, I aſſure you I ſhall take particular notice of it. If you contrive to give it me to-morrow as we go to dinner, I would give you the other key the day after at breakfaſt, and you could

return it to me in the ſame way you did the firſt. Pray do not defer it any longer, as we ought not to give Mama an opportunity to diſcover it.

When you have once got poſſeſſion of the key, you will be ſo good to make uſe of it to take my letters; and by this means Mr. Danceny will oftener hear from me, which will be much more convenient than at preſent. I was a good deal frightened at firſt, which I hope you will be ſo good to excuſe; and that you will, nevertheleſs, continue your friendſhip as heretofore: you may depend on my gratitude.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your moſt obedient

Humble Servant.

Sept. 28, 17—.

LETTER XCVI.

Viscount de VALMONT *to the Marchioness de* MERTEUIL.

I DARE say, you have been in daily expectation of my compliments and eulogiums on your adventure; I even make no doubt but my long silence may have put you a little out of temper: But to sum up all, I will freely own I have ever thought, that when one had nothing but praise to offer a woman, he might safely trust to herself, and employ his time on other matters. Yet I must thank you for my share in it, and congratulate you on your own. I will even, for this once, to make you perfectly happy, agree you have much surpassed my expectations. And now let us

ſee, whether, on my ſide, I have not partly fulfilled yours.

Madame de Tourvel is not the ſubject we are now on; her ſlow proceedings do not meet your approbation; you like to hear of buſineſs done; long-ſpun ſcenes diſguſt you; but I never before experienced the pleaſure I do now in thoſe pretended delays.

Yes, I enjoy it; to ſee this prudent woman, entangled imperceptibly in a path from whence ſhe cannot return; whoſe rapid and dangerous declivity hurries her on againſt her will, and forces her to follow me — then, frightened at the danger, would, but cannot ſtop; — her anxiety and warineſs make her ſteps ſlow, but ſtill they muſt ſucceed each other. Sometimes, not daring to view the danger, ſhe ſhuts her eyes, and abandons herſelf to my care. New dreads often reanimate her efforts; and, in her

grievous

grievous fright, ſhe again endeavours to return, waſtes her ſtrength to climb painfully a ſhort ſpace; and ſoon, by a magic power, finds herſelf nearer the danger ſhe vainly endeavoured to fly. Then, having no other guide or ſupport but me, without thinking any longer of reproaching me with her inevitable fall, ſhe implores me to protract it. Fervent prayers, humble ſupplications, all that terrified mortals offer up to the Divinity, I receive from her; and you would have me be deaf to her vows, to deſtroy the worſhip ſhe renders me, and employ the power ſhe invokes to ſupport her, in hurling her into deſtruction. Let me at leaſt have time to contemplate this affecting ſtruggle between love and virtue.

Is not this, then, the exhibition you fly to at the theatre with ſo much avidity, and applaud with ſo much ardour? And do you imagine it can

be leſs endearing in realizing it? — The ſentiments of a pure and tender heart, which dreads the happineſs it wiſhes, and ceaſes not to defend itſelf when it even ceaſes to reſiſt, you enthuſiaſtically admire: And pray, is the ruling principle of this great work to be rejected?

Yet, thoſe are the delicious enjoyments this celeſtial woman daily offers me, and you reproach me for reliſhing them. Alas! the time will come too ſoon, when, degraded by her fall, I ſhall view her with as much indifference as another.

But I wander; for, ſpeaking of her, I forget that I did not intend even to mention her. An unknown power impels me, and inceſſantly recalls her to me when I am even injuring her: let me baniſh this dangerous idea, be myſelf again, and entertain you with a more agreeable adventure. Your late pupil, now be-

come mine, shall be the subject; and now, I hope, you'll again know your friend.

Having, for a few days past, been more gently treated by my charming devotee, and consequently more disengaged, I observed the little Volanges was really handsome; and that if it was ridiculous in Danceny to be in love with her, it would be no less so in me not to embrace a dissipation that my solitude called for. I even thought it an act of justice, to repay myself for the trouble I had had with her: I recollected, also, that you offered her to me before Danceny had any pretensions to her; and thought myself well grounded in asserting certain rights, which he claimed only from my refusal and abdication. The engaging mien of the little creature, her pretty mouth, her childish air, even her aukwardness, strengthened those sage reflections. I deter-

mined to act conformably, and success has crown'd the enterprize. I think I see you all impatience to know how I supplanted the cherished lover, the seducing arts fit to be employed for such a tender age, and so unexperienced: spare yourself the trouble, for I employed none. — Whilst you, managing with dexterity the arms of your sex, triumph by artifice, I, in a manly way, subdue by authority, — sure of my prey, if I can close with it. I had no occasion for dissimulation, but to get it within my reach, and that I made use of scarcely deserves the name.

I took the advantage of the first letter Danceny wrote to his fair one, and, after having made the signal agreed on, instead of employing my address to deliver it, I contriv'd obstacles to prevent it; and, feigning a share in the impatience this excited, pointed out the remedy after causing the evil.

The

The young thing is lodged in an apartment that opens into the gallery, and the mother, very properly, keeps the key. Nothing, then, was wanting but to get poſſeſſion of the key, and nothing more eaſy in the execution: I aſked for it for two hours, only to have another made by it: then correſpondence, interviews, nocturnal rendezvous, all were convenient and ſafe: but, would you believe it, the timid child was frightened, and refuſed. Any other would have been driven to deſpair: to me it was a more poignant pleaſure. I wrote to Danceny, complaining of this denial; and was ſo ſucceſsful, that the thoughtleſs youth urged, nay even exacted of his timid miſtreſs, that ſhe ſhould agree to my requeſt, and give herſelf up to my diſcretion.

I muſt own myſelf well pleaſed to change my character, and that the young man ſhould do for me what he

expected

expected I was to do for him. This idea enhanc'd the value of the adventure; and, as soon as I got possession of the delicious key, I lost no time: —it was last night.

When I was assured all were at rest in the Castle, taking my dark lantern, and in a proper toilette for the hour and circumstance, I paid my first visit to your pupil. Every thing had been prepared (and that by herself) to prevent noise: she was in her first sleep, so that I was by her bed side without awaking her. I was at first tempted to go on farther, and make every thing pass for a dream; but dreading the effects of a surprize, and the consequences naturally attendant, I chose to awake the pretty sleeper cautiously, which I effected without the alarm I dreaded.

After having calmed her first fears, as I did not come there to chat, I ventured to take some liberties: they

did not, certainly, inform her in the convent, to how many different dangers timid innocence is exposed, and all that she had to take care of to guard against a surprize; for, using all her strength to prevent a kiss, which was only a false attack, she left all the rest defenceless: how was it possible to resist the temptation?—I then changed my attack, and immediately took possession of the post. At that instant we had both like to be undone; the little girl, scared, was in earnest going to cry out; happily, her voice was stifled with her tears: she flung herself, also, on the string of the bell, but I held her arm opportunely.

"What are you about? (then said "I) Will you ruin yourself for ever? "Do you think you will be able to "persuade any one that I am here "without your consent? Who but "yourself could supply me the means

"of

"of getting in?—And this key that "I had from you, which I could not "have from any one else, will you "take it upon you to tell the use it "was designed for?"—This short speech did not calm either grief or anger, but it brought on submission. I don't know whether I had the tone of eloquence, but certain I am I had not the action: one hand employed for strength, the other for love, what orator could pretend to gracefulness in such a situation? If you conceive it right, you must own, at least, it was very favourable for the attack: but I know nothing; and, as you say, the simplest creature, a boarding school girl, would lead me like a child.

She was in the utmost affliction, but felt the necessity of coming to some resolution, and entering into a composition. Being inexorable to prayers, she proceeded to offers: you think, perhaps,

perhaps, I ſold this important poſt very dear; by no means; I promiſed every thing for a kiſs; however, the kiſs taken, I did not keep my word; my reaſons were good: it had not been agreed whether it ſhould be given or taken; by dint of bargaining we agreed on a ſecond, and that was to be received; then guiding her trembling arms round me, and preſſing her with one of mine more amorouſly, the ſoft kiſs was not only received, but perfectly received in ſuch a manner, that love could not have done it better.— So much plain dealing deſerved to be rewarded, and I immediately granted the requeſt: the hand was withdrawn, but, I don't know by what accident, I found myſelf in its place. You now ſuppoſe me very alert, and in great haſte, don't you?—Not in the leaſt; I have already told you I delight in delays: when one is once certain of coming to the end of the journey, what occaſion for haſte?

Seriouſly,

Seriously, I was glad, for once, to observe the power of opportunity; and it was here divested of all foreign aid. She had, however, love to combat with; and love, supported by modesty and shame, strengthened by the bad humour I had put her in. There was nothing in my favour but opportunity; — it was there, always ready, always present, and love absent.

To be certain in my observations, I was so mischievous to employ no more force than what could be easily combated: only, if my charming enemy, abusing my condescension, attempted to escape me, I kept her in awe, by the same dread whose happy effects I had already experienced. — At length the tender, lovely girl, without farther trouble, first complied, and then consented: not but that, after the first moment, reproaches and tears returned together — I can't tell whether

whether true or feigned; but, as it always happens, they ceaſed as ſoon as I began to give freſh cauſe for them. At laſt, from weakneſs to reproach, and from reproach to weakneſs, we ſeparated, perfectly ſatisfied with each other, and equally agreed for the rendezvous this night.

I retired to my apartment at the dawn of day, quite exhauſted with fatigue and ſleep; yet I ſacrificed one and the other to my inclination to be at breakfaſt in the morning. I am paſſionately fond of the next day's exhibition. You cannot conceive any thing like this. It was a confuſion in the countenance, a difficulty in the walk, dejected eyes ſo ſwelled, and the round viſage ſo lengthened, nothing could be ſo groteſque; and the mother, for the firſt time, alarmed at this ſudden alteration, ſeemed to ſhow a deal of affection for her; and the Preſidente alſo, who ſeemed to be much

much concerned for her. As to her cares, they are only lent; for the day will come, and it is not far off, when they may be returned to her.

Adieu, my lovely friend!

Oct. 1, 17—.

LETTER XCVII.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to the Marchioness de* MERTEUIL.

AH, Madam! I am the most miserable creature on earth; my affliction is very great, indeed. To whom shall I fly for consolation? or who will give me advice in my distress? Mr. de Valmont and Danceny --- the very name of Danceny distracts me --- How shall I begin? How shall I tell you? --- I don't know how to go about it; my heart is full --- I must, however,

ever, diſburthen myſelf to ſome one; and you are the only perſon in whom I can or dare confide; you have been ſo kind to me. But I am no longer worthy of your friendſhip; I will even ſay, I do not wiſh for it. Every one here has been uneaſy about me, and they only augmented my grief; I am ſo convinced I am unworthy of it. Rather ſcold me, abuſe me, for I am guilty; yet ſave me from ruin. If you do not compaſſionate and adviſe me, I ſhall expire of grief.

I muſt tell you then --- my hand ſhakes ſo, I can hardly hold the pen, and I am as red as ſcarlet; but it is the bluſh of ſhame. Well, I will bear it, as the firſt puniſhment of my crime. I will relate the whole.

I muſt tell you that Mr. Valmont, who has always hitherto delivered me Mr. Danceny's letters, on a ſudden diſcovered ſo much difficulty in it, that he would have the key of my cham-

chamber. I assure you, I was very much against it: but he wrote to Danceny about it; and Danceny also insisted on it. It gives me so much pain to refuse him any thing, especially since our absence, which makes him so unhappy, that I consented; not in the least suspecting what would be the consequence.

Yesterday Mr. Valmont made use of this key to get into my chamber while I was asleep. I so little expected such a visit, that I was greatly frightened at waking: but as he spoke to me instantly, I knew him, and did not cry out; as I immediately thought he came to bring me a letter from Danceny. No such thing. He wanted to kiss me directly; and while I was struggling, he contrived to do what I would not have suffered for the whole world. But he would have a kiss first; which I was forced to comply with: for what could I do? I endeavoured

deavoured to call out; but, besides that I could not, he told me, that if any one should come he would throw all the fault on me; which, indeed, was very easy to be done on account of the key. After that, he did not go away any more. Then he would have a second kiss; and I don't know how that was, but it gave me a strange perturbation; and after that it was still worse. At last, after --- but you must excuse me from telling the rest; for I am as unhappy as it is possible. But what I reproach myself most for, and that I can't help mentioning, is, I am afraid I did not make as much resistance as I could. I can't tell how it was, for certainly I don't love Mr. Valmont, but on the contrary; yet there were some moments that I was as if I lov'd him --- however, you may well think I always said no: but I was sensible I did not do as I said; and it was as if in spite of me; and I was,

was, moreover, in great trouble. If it is always ſo hard to defend one's ſelf, one muſt be very well uſed to it. Mr. de Valmont ſpeaks to one in ſuch a way, that one does not know how to anſwer him: and would you believe it, when he went away I was vexed; and yet I was ſilly enough to conſent to his coming again this night: that afflicts me more than all the reſt.

Notwithſtanding, I promiſe you I will prevent him from coming. He was hardly gone, but I found I did very wrong to promiſe him, and I cried all the reſt of the time. My greateſt trouble is about Danceny. Every time I think of him, my tears almoſt choak me, and I am always thinking of him --- and even now you may ſee the effect, for the paper is wet with my tears. I ſhall never be able to get the better of it, if it was only on his account. I was quite exhauſted, and yet I could not cloſe my

eyes.

eyes. When I got up, and looked in the glaſs, I was enough to frighten one, I was ſo altered.

Mama perceived it as ſoon as I appeared, and aſked me, what was the matter with me? I burſt out crying immediately. I thought ſhe would have chid me, and maybe that would not have been ſo diſtreſſing to me; however, it was quite otherwiſe; ſhe ſpoke to me with great mildneſs, which I did not deſerve. She deſired I would not afflict myſelf ſo; but ſhe did not know the cauſe of my diſtreſs; and that I ſhould make myſelf ſick. I often wiſh I was dead. I could hold out no longer. I flung myſelf in her arms, ſobbing, and told her, "Ah, mama! your daughter is very "unhappy." Mama could no longer contain herſelf, and wept a little. All this increaſed my ſorrow. Fortunately ſhe did not aſk the reaſon;

 for

for if she had, I should not known what to say.

I entreat you, dear Madam, to write to me as soon as possible, and inform me how I am to act; for I have no power to think of any thing, my affliction is so great. Please to inclose your letter to Mr. Valmont: but if you write to him at the same time, I entreat you not to mention a word of this.

I have the honour to be, with great friendship, Madam, your most humble and obedient servant.

I dare not sign this letter!

Oct. 1, 17—.

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LETTER XCVIII.

Madame de Volanges *to the Marchioness de* Merteuil.

A Few days ago you applied to me, my charming friend, for advice and consolation; it is now my turn, and I am to make the same request you made to me for myself. I am really in great affliction, and fear I have not taken the proper steps to avoid my present sorrow.

My uneasiness is on account of my daughter. Since our departure, I observed she was always dejected and melancholy; that I expected, and assumed a severity of behaviour which I judged necessary; flattering myself, that absence and dissipation would soon banish an affection, which I view-

ed as a childiſh error, rather than a deep-rooted paſſion: but I am diſappointed in my expectations, and obſerve ſhe gives way more and more to a dangerous dejection. I am ſeriouſly alarmed for her health. Theſe few days paſt, particularly, there is a viſible alteration in her; and yeſterday ſhe affected me very much, and alarmed us all.

The ſtrongeſt proof I have of her being ſenſibly affected, is becauſe I find that awe ſhe always ſtood in of me is greatly diminiſhed. Yeſterday morning, on my only aſking her if ſhe was indiſpoſed, ſhe flung herſelf in my arms, ſaying, ſhe was very unhappy, and ſobbed and cried piteouſly. You can't conceive my grief; my eyes filled immediately; I had ſcarcely time to turn about, to prevent her ſeeing me. Fortunately, I had the prudence not to aſk her any queſtions, and ſhe did not venture to ſay any thing more;

never-

nevertheless, I am confident it is this unhappy passion disturbs her.

What resolution to take, if it should last, I know not. Shall I be the cause of my child's unhappiness? Shall the most delicate sensations of the mind, tenderness and constancy, be employed against her? Is this the duty of a mother? Were I even to stifle the natural inclination that induces us to seek our children's happiness; should I call that weakness, which I am persuaded is the first, the most sacred duty? Should I force her inclinations, am I not answerable for the dreadful consequences that may ensue? What abuse of my maternal authority would it not be to place my daughter between guilt and misery!

My dear friend, I will not imitate what I have so often condemned. I was certainly authorised to chuse for my daughter; in that, I only assisted her with my experience: I did not

mean to uſe it as a right; I only fulfilled a duty, which I ſhould have counteracted, had I diſpoſed of her in contempt of an inclination which I could not prevent, the extent and duration of which neither ſhe or I can foreſee. No; ſhe ſhall never marry Gercourt and love Danceny; I will much rather expoſe my authority than her virtue.

I am, then, of opinion, it will be the moſt prudent way to recal my promiſe to M. de Gercourt. You have my reaſons, which, I think, ſtronger than my promiſe. I will go farther; for as matters are circumſtanced, by fulfilling my engagement I ſhould in reallity violate it: for if I am bound to keep my daughter's ſecret from M. de Gercourt, I am alſo bound not to abuſe the ignorance I leave him in, and to act for him, as I believe he would act himſelf, was he better informed. Should I, then, in-

 jurioully

juriously deceive him, when he reposes his confidence in me, and, whilst he honours me with the title of mother, deceive him in the choice he makes for his children? Those reflections, so just in themselves, and which I cannot withstand, give me more uneasiness than I can express.

In contrast to the misfortunes I dread, I picture to myself my daughter happy in the choice her heart has made, fulfilling her duties with pleasure; my son-in-law, equally satisfied, daily congratulating himself on his choice; each enjoying the other's happiness, and both uniting to augment mine. Should, then, the prospect of so charming a futurity be sacrificed to vain motives? And what are those that restrain me? Interest only. Where is, then, the advantage of my daughter being born to a large fortune, if she is to be nevertheless the slave to that fortune? I will al-

low, that M. de Gercourt is, perhaps, a better match than I could have expected for my daughter; I will even own, I was much pleased when he made her his choice: but Danceny is of as good a family as he, and is nothing inferior to him in personal accomplishments; he has, moreover, the advantage over M. de Gercourt of loving and being beloved. He is not rich, it's true; but my daughter is rich enough for both. Ah! why should I deprive her the pleasure of making the fortune of the man she loves? Those matches of convenience, as they are called, where certainly every thing is convenient except inclination and disposition, are they not the most fruitful source of those scandalous rumours which are become so frequent? I would much rather defer matters a little. I shall have an opportunity to study my daughter's disposition, which as yet I am

am a ſtranger to. I have reſolution enough to give her ſome temporary uneaſineſs, in order to make her enjoy ſome temporary happineſs: but I will not riſk making her miſerable for ever.

Thus, my dear friend, I have related to you my afflictions, on which I beg your advice. Thoſe ſevere ſubjects are a contraſt to your amiable gaiety, and ſeem not at all adapted to your age; but your good ſenſe outſtrips your years. Your friendſhip will alſo aid your prudence; and I am confident, both will gratify the maternal anxiety that implores them.

Adieu, my dear friend! never doubt the ſincerity of my ſentiments.

Caſtle of ——,

Oct. 2, 17—.

LETTER XCIX.

Viscount de Valmont *to the Marchioness de* Merteuil.

Trifling events still, my dear friend; nothing of consequence; no action; scenes only; therefore arm yourself with patience: you must take a large dose; for whilst my Presidente goes such a slow pace, your pupil slides back, which is much worse: but I am of that happy temper, I can divert myself with all this nonsense. I really begin to be very comfortable here; and can assure you, I have not experienced a tedious moment in my old aunt's melancholy castle. What could I wish for more than what I have, enjoyments, privations, hope, and incertitude? What more is to be had

had on a grand theatre? Why spectators. Ah! a little patience, they will not be wanting. If they do not see me at work, they shall at least see my work compleated; they will then have nothing to do but to admire and applaud: for they shall applaud. I can this instant with certainty foretel the moment of my austere devotee's fall. I this night assisted at the last agonies of her virtue; soft weakness has replaced it. I have fixed its epocha, at farthest, to our next interview: you will call this pride. He announces his victory before he has gained it! Softly; be calm! To give you a proof of my modesty, I will give you the history of my defeat.

Upon my word, your little pupil is a most ridiculous being. She is really a child, and should be treated as one; it would be of service to enjoin her a little penance. Would you believe it? after what passed between

us the day before yesterday, after the amicable manner in which we parted yesterday morning, I found her door locked on the inside when I came at night, as was agreed. What do you think of that? Those childish tricks are passable on the eve; but on the morrow is it not ridiculous? I did not, however, laugh at first; for never did I feel the ascendancy of my character more hurt. I went to this rendezvous without any incitement for pleasure, and merely through decency; my own bed, which I much wanted at that time, was preferable to any other, and I parted from it with some reluctance; yet when I met this obstacles I was all on fire to surmount it: I was humbled, to be sported with by a child. I was obliged to retire in very bad humour, fully resolved to have nothing more to do with this silly girl, or her matters. I immediately wrote her a note, which

I intended giving her this day, wherein I appreciated her as she deserved: but night bringing good counsel, as is said, I reflected this morning, that not having here a choice of dissipations, it was better to keep this, and suppressed my note. Since I have reflected on it, I can't reconcile it to myself to have had the idea of putting an end to an adventure before I had it in my power to ruin the heroine. What lengths will not a first emotion carry us to! Happy are those, my dear friend, who, like you, never accustom themselves to give way to it. I have deferred my revenge; and this sacrifice I make to your designs on Gercourt.

Now my wrath is subsided, I only see the ridiculousness of your pupil's behaviour. I should be fond to know what she expects to gain by it; for my part, I am at a loss: if it should be to make a defence, she is rather

late.

late. She must explain this enigma to me one day or other, for I must be satisfied. It is only, perhaps, that she was fatigued; and really that may be the case; for certainly she does not yet know that the shafts of love, like the lance of Achilles, carry with them the remedy for the wounds they give. But no: I will engage by her little mien all day, that there is something like repentance; a something like virtue — virtue, indeed! — she is a pretty creature to pretend to virtue! Ah! she must leave that to the only woman who was truly born for it, knows how to embellish it, and make it revered. Your pardon, my dear friend: but this very evening it was that the scene between Madame de Tourvel and me happened, of which I am about giving you an account, and which has still left me in great emotion. It is not without some violence I endeavour to dissipate the impression

pression it has left on me; it is even to assist it, I sit down to write to you: you must make some allowance for this first impulse.

For some days past Madame de Tourvel and I have been agreed about our sentiments, and we no longer dispute on any thing but words. It was always, *her friendship* that answered *my love*: but this conventional language made no alteration in the meaning of things. Had we even still remained so, I should not have gone on, perhaps, with so much dispatch, but with no less certainty. There was no longer any thought of putting me from hence, as was at first mentioned; and as to our daily conversations, if I am solicitous to offer opportunities, she takes care not to let them slip.

It is usually in our walks our rendezvous occur; the bad weather we had all day left no room for hope; I was much disappointed at it, and did not

not foresee how much it was in my favour. Not being able to walk, after dinner they sat down to cards; as I seldom play, and was not wanted, I retired to my room, with no other design than to wait till the party was over. I was returning to join the company, when the charming woman, who was going into her apartment, whether through weakness or imprudence, said in a soft manner, "Where are you going? There is "no one in the saloon." That was sufficient, you may believe, for me to endeavour to go in with her. I found less reluctance than expected: it's true, I had the precaution to begin the conversation at the door on indifferent matters; but we were scarcely settled when I began the true one, and I spoke *of my love to my friend*. "Oh," says she, "let us not speak of that "here;" and trembled. Poor woman! she sees herself going.

Yet

Yet ſhe was in the wrong to have had any terrors. For ſome time paſt being certain of ſucceſs one day or other, and ſeeing her employ ſo much exertion in uſeleſs ſtruggles, I reſolved to reſerve mine, and wait without effort her ſurrender from laſſitude. You already know I muſt have a compleat triumph, and that I will not be indebted to opportunity. It was even after the formation of this plan, and in order to be preſſing without engaging too far, I reverted to the word love, ſo obſtinately refuſed. Being aſſured my ardour was not queſtioned, I aſſumed a milder ſtrain. This refuſal no longer vexed me, it only afflicted me; my tender friend ſhould give me ſome conſolations. As ſhe conſoled me, one hand remained in mine, the lovely body reſted on my arm, and we were exceeding cloſe together. You muſt have certainly remarked, how much in ſuch a ſitua-

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tion, as the defence abates, the demands and refusals draw nearer; how the head turns aside, the looks cast down, whilst the conversation, always pronounced in a weak tone, becomes scarce and interrupted. Those precious symptoms announce, in an unequivocal manner, the consent of the mind, but rarely has it reached the senses. I even think it always dangerous to attempt any enterprise of consequence; because this state of abandonment being always accompanied with the softest pleasure, cannot be disturbed without ruffling the temper, which infallibly decides in favour of the defence.

But in the present case, prudence was so much more necessary, as I had every thing to dread from the forgetfulness of the danger this abandonment would occasion to my tender pensive devotee: and the avowal I solicited I did not even require to be

pro-

pronounced; a look would ſuffice; a ſingle glance would crown my happineſs.

My charming friend, thoſe lovely eyes then were raiſed on me, that celeſtial mouth even pronounced— "Well; yes, I—" in an inſtant the look was extinct, the voice failed, and this adorable woman dropped in my arms. I had ſcarcely time to receive her, when diſengaging herſelf with a convulſive force and wild look, her hands raiſed to heaven, ſhe exclaimed, "God — Oh, my God, ſave me!" and inſtantly, as quick as lightning, was on her knees ten paces from me! I could hear her almoſt ſuffocating. I came forward to aſſiſt her: but ſeizing my hands, which ſhe bathed with her tears, ſometimes embracing my knees, "Yes it is you," ſaid ſhe, "it is you "will ſave me; you do not wiſh my "death; leave me; ſave me; leave "me; for God's ſake! leave me:"

and

and those incoherent expressions were brought out with most affecting sobs; yet still she held me so strong I could not get from her; however, making an effort, I rais'd her in my arms: instantly her tears ceas'd; she could not speak, her joints stiffened, and violent convulsions succeeded this storm.

I must own, I was exceedingly moved, and believe I should have complied with her request, if the circumstances had not even obliged me to it. But this much is certain; after having given her some assistance, I left her, as she desired; and I am well pleased with myself for it. I have already received almost my reward.

I expected, as on the first day of my declaration, I should not see her any more for the evening; but she came down to the saloon about eight, and only told the company she had been much indisposed: her counte-

nance

nance was dejected, her voice weak, her deportment composed, but her look mild, and often fixed on me.— As she declined playing, I was obliged to take her seat, and she placed herself beside me. During supper she remained alone in the saloon. At our return, I thought I perceived she had been crying: to be satisfied, I told her I was afraid she still felt some uneasiness from her disorder, to which she obligingly answered, "Her dis-"order would not go so quickly as "it came." At last, when we retired, I gave her my hand, and at the door of her apartment, she very forcibly squeez'd mine: it is true, this motion seemed to me to be involuntary; so much the better; it is a stronger proof of my power.

I am confident she is now happy to have gone such a length; all expences are paid; nothing now remains but enjoyment. Perhaps now, whilst I

am writing to you, ſhe is poſſeſſed with the ſoft idea; but, if ſhe ſhould even be engaged in a new ſcheme of defence, you and I know how ſuch projects end. Now let me aſk you, can things be put off longer than our next interview? I expect there will be ſome forms to be ſettled; but, the firſt difficulties ſurmounted, do thoſe auſtere prudes know where to ſtop? Their affections are real exploſions; reſiſtance gives them ſtrength; my untractable devotee would run after me, if I ceas'd running after her.

At length, my lovely friend, I ſhall ſoon call on you for the performance of your promiſe; you undoubtedly remember our agreement after my ſucceſs; this trifling infidelity to your Chevalier. — Are you ready? I wiſh for it as paſſionately as if I had never known you. However, knowing you is, perhaps, a ſtronger motive for wiſhing for it.

I am juſt, and no galant.*

It ſhall be the firſt infidelity I ſhall commit againſt my ſolemn conqueſt; and, I promiſe you, I will embrace the firſt pretence to be abſent from her four and twenty hours: that ſhall be her puniſhment for having kept me ſo long diſtant from her: It is now more than two months I have been taken up with this adventure: ay, two months and three days, including to-morrow, as it will not be really conſummated until then. This brings to my memory, that Mademoiſelle B—— held out three compleat months. I am pleaſed to find ſheer coquetry can make a longer defence than auſtere virtue.

Adieu, charmer! I muſt leave off, for it is very late. This letter has led me farther than I intended; but, as

* Voltaire's comedy of Nanine.

I ſend

I send to Paris to-morrow, I would not miss the opportunity of letting you partake a day sooner of your friend's good success.

Oct. 2, 17—, at Night.

LETTER C.

The Viscount de VALMONT *to the Marchioness de* MERTEUIL.

MY dear friend! I am betrayed, bubbled, ruined; I am enraged beyond expression: Madame de Tourvel is gone off. She is gone, and I knew nothing of it! I was not in the way to oppose her, to reproach her with her base treachery! Do not imagine I should have let her go quietly; she should have staid, had I been even obliged to have used force. Fool as I was! I slept peaceably, wrapt in a credulous

credulous ſecurity! I ſlept whilſt the thunder ſtruck me! I cannot conceive the meaning of this abrupt departure; I will for ever renounce the knowledge of women.

When I recall the tranſactions of yeſterday! — or rather the evening — the melting look, the tender voice, the ſqueezing the hand — all the while planning her flight. — Oh! woman, woman! complain, then, if you are deceived! Yes, every kind of treachery that is employed againſt you is a robbery committed on you.

With what rapture ſhall I be revenged! I ſhall again meet this perfidious woman; I will reſume my power over her. If love has been ſufficient to furniſh the means, what is it not capable of when aſſiſted with revenge? I ſhall again ſee her at my knees, trembling, and bath'd in tears! calling on me for pity with her deceitful voice; and I will have none for her.

What is she now doing? What can she think of? Perhaps applauding herself for having deceived me; and, true to the genius of her sex, enjoys that pleasure in the highest degree. What her boasted virtue could not effect, deceit has accomplished without a struggle; it was her disingenuity I should have dreaded. —— Then, to be obliged to stifle my resentment; to be obliged to affect a tender sorrow, when my heart is possessed with rage. Reduced to supplicate a rebellious woman, who has withdrawn herself from my obedience! Ought I then be so much humbled? And by whom? By a weak woman, who was never accustomed to resist! What avails my having possession of her heart, having inflamed it with the whole fire of love, having raised her feelings even to intoxication; if, calm in her retreat, she can now be prouder of her flight than I of

of my victories? And must I bear this? My dear friend, you will not believe it; you will not, surely, have such a humiliating opinion of me!

What fatality attaches me to this woman? Are there not a hundred others who wish I would pay attention to them, and eagerly accept it? If even none were so enchanting, the charms of variety, the allurements of new conquests, the splendour of the number; do not they afford a plentiful harvest of soft pleasures? Why, then, do I run madding after this one that flies me, and neglect those that offer? I am at a loss to account for it, but so it is.—There is no happiness, no repose for me, until I possess this woman, whom I love and hate with equal rage. I shall not be able to support my fate until I have disposed of her's: then, tranquil and satiated, I shall behold her a prey to the ravages I now experience, and will raise

a thousand others; hope and fear, diffidence and security, all evils the offspring of hatred, all the gifts that love can bestow, shall alternately engross her heart at my will. The time will come——But what labours have I not yet to encounter? — How near was I yesterday, and how distant to-day! How am I to regain the ground I have lost? I dare not undertake any one step: to come to some resolution I should be calm, and my blood boils in my veins.

The calm serenity with which every one replies to my demands on this extraordinary, on this uncommon event, and its cause, adds to my torments.— No one knows the reason; none seem to give themselves the least uneasiness about it; it scarcely would have been mentioned, could I have started any other subject. I flew to Madame de Rosemonde the moment I heard the news, who replied, with

the natural indifference of old age, it was the consequence of the indisposition Madame de Tourvel had suffered yesterday: she dreaded a fit of illness, and wished to be at home; a resolution she did not think proper to oppose, as she would have done on a similar occasion; as if the contrast was applicable, — between her who should think of nothing but futurity, and the other, who is the delight and torment of my life.

Madame de Volanges, who I had suspected at first of being an accomplice, seems dissatisfied for not having been consulted on this occasion. I must own I am very well pleased she has been disappointed of the pleasure of prejudicing me; which is still a stronger proof she has not the confidence of this woman so much as I dreaded: that is an enemy the less. How would she have exulted, did she know she fled from me! How intole-

rable her pride, had it been the consequence of her advice! To what an immensity would her importance have been raised! Good God! how I detest her! — Yes, I will renew my connection with the daughter, and initiate her in her business: I believe I shall stay here some time; I am at present inclined to this measure, in the tumult of reflections that croud on me.

Don't you, really now, think, after so extraordinary a proceeding, my ungrateful fair one should dread me? If she imagines I shall pursue her, she will not fail to prevent my admission; and, I can assure you, I am as little inclined to permit her such a custom, as to bear such an insult. I had much rather she should be told I remain here; I will even strenuously press her to return again: then, when she is fully convinced I am far from her, I will suddenly come to her house, and

abide

abide the effect of my ſcheme.— That it may have its full force, it muſt not be hurried; ſtill I will not anſwer for my impatience: twenty times this day was I tempted to call for my horſes. I will contain myſelf, however, and wait your anſwer here; I only requeſt, my lovely friend, you will not let me wait long for it.

What hurts me moſt is to be ignorant of what happens: my fellow, who is at Paris, has a claim on her waiting maid; he may be ſerviceable; I ſend him money, and his inſtructions. Permit me to include both in this letter, and requeſt to have them delivered into his hand by ſome of your ſervants: this precaution is the more neceſſary, as the ſcoundrel has a trick of never receiving any letters I write him on buſineſs he finds troubleſome; and, at this period, he does not ſeem to be quite ſo enraptured with his girl as I could wiſh him.

 Adieu,

Adieu, my lovely friend! If a happy thought ſhould ſtrike you, or any means of bringing me ſpeedily to action, loſe not a moment. I have often experienced your friendſhip; I forcibly experience it now, for I am more ſerene ſince I ſat down to write. I ſpeak, at leaſt, to one who comprehends me, not to the inanimate beings with whom I vegetate ſince this morning. On my word, the more I proceed, the more I am inclined to think we are the only couple worth any thing in this life.

Oct. 3, 17—

LETTER CI.

The Viscount de VALMONT *to* AZOLAN, *his Huntsman.*

(Inclosed in the foregoing.)

YOU must be a stupid fellow, indeed, to set out this morning, and not have known that Madame de Tourvel was going away also; or, if you knew it, not to have given me notice. To what purpose is it, then, you spend my money, if you only get drunk with the men, and loiter your time in courting the waiting maids, if you do not give me better information of what is going forward? — This is entirely owing to your negligence; therefore, I now give you notice, if such another happens in this business, it shall be the last you will be guilty of in my service.

You must inform me of every thing that happens at Madame de Tourvel's, relative to her health; whether she sleeps well; whether she is melancholy or chearful; if she goes abroad often, and where; if she sees much company, and who goes there; how she passes her time; whether she is out of temper with her women, particularly the one that was with her here; how she employs her time when alone; if, when she reads, she is composed, or stops to muse; and the same when she writes. Remember, also, to make a friend of whoever carries the letters to the post office: often do that business for him; and, when he accepts it, send away only those you think of no consequence, and send me the rest, especially those for Madame de Volanges, if there should be any.

Settle your matters so as to be still the favourite of Julia. If she has

another, as you thought, bring her to consent to share her favours; and do not be so ridiculous as to give yourself airs of jealousy: you will be only circumstanced as your superiors; but, if your rival should be troublesome, or if you perceive he takes up too much of Julia's time in the day, so that she should not be so often with her mistress, to observe her, you must, by some means or other, drive him away, or pick a quarrel with him; do not be afraid of the consequences, — I will support you: above all, leave the house as little as possible; for it is by assiduity only you can make your observations with certainty. If, by chance, any of the servants should be discharged, offer yourself in their room, as if no longer in my service: in such case, you must say you left me to get into a more quiet and regular service. Endeavour, as much as possible, to be

hired; I shall, notwithstanding, keep you still in mine during the time; and you will be as you was before at the Duchess of ——, and Madame de Tourvel will also reward you in the end.

If you was zealous and skilful, those instructions should be sufficient: but, to assist one and the other, I send you some money: the enclosed bill on my steward entitles you to call on him for twenty-five louis, for I suppose you have no money. You will make use of as much as is necessary, to prevail on Julia to settle a correspondence with me; the remainder to treat the servants: let it be as often as you can in the porter's lodge, that he may like to see you. However, do not forget, it is your services I mean to pay, and not your pleasures.

Accustom Julia, betimes, to observe and report every thing, even what she may think the most trifling; it is

better she should write ten useless lines, than omit a material one; and what often appears a matter of indifference, is quite otherwise. As I must be instantly informed, if any thing should happen you think of consequence after you receive this letter, send off Philip directly on the message horse, to fix himself at ****, and remain there until farther orders; it will be a stage in case of necessity; but, for common correspondence, the post will be sufficient.

Take great care not to lose this letter; read it over every day; not only not to forget any thing, but also to be certain you have it. Do, in a few words every thing you ought, now I honour you with my confidence. You very well know, if I am satisfied with your conduct, you shall be satisfied with me.

Oct. 3, 17—

LETTER CII.

The Presidente de TOURVEL *to Madame de* ROSEMONDE.

YOU will be very much surprized, dear Madam, to learn I quitted your house so precipitately: this proceeding will, doubtless, appear very extraordinary; but how will your astonishment be increased, when you shall know my reasons! You will, perhaps, imagine, when I confide them to you, I have not paid proper attention to the respect the necessary tranquility of your age commands; that I am insensible to the sentiments of veneration you are so justly entitled to from me. Ah! forgive me, Madam! my heart is oppressed; it seeks to pour out its distress into the friendly bosom of prudence

dence and mildness: — where could it find it but with you? Look upon me as your child; take a maternal compassion on me; I implore it; my sentiments for you may give me a claim to it.

The time is fled, when, wholly possessed with those laudable ideas, I knew not these I now experience, which ravage the soul, and deprive me of the power of resistance, whilst they impose its necessity! Ah! this fatal visit has undone me!

What can I say? — I love, — yes, I love to distraction! Alas! this fatal word, which now I write for the first time, — this word, so often solicited but never granted, my life should now expiate to let him hear who has inspired it; yet I must ever refuse! He will remain doubtful of the sentiments I feel for him. — I am miserable! — Oh, that he could as readily read my heart as rule it! — I should

suffer

suffer less if he but knew what I endure; but even you, my venerable friend, can have but a faint idea of my sufferings.

I shall in a few minutes fly him, and load him with affliction. He will think me near him, and I shall be far from him. — At the usual hour of seeing him every day, I shall be in places unknown to him, and where he cannot come: every thing is prepared full in my view, and all announce my unhappy flight: all is ready but me!—and the more my heart recoils, the more I am convinced of the necessity of submitting to my fate. —— I must submit; it is better to die than live in guilt: already I feel my criminality; modesty only is preserved, but virtue is vanished: — what yet is left me, I must acknowledge, is due to his generosity. Intoxicated with pleasure, seeing and listening to him, enraptured in his

arms,

arms, and the greatest of all extacy, that of making him happy, I was divested of strength or power; scarce any left to struggle, but none to resist; I shuddered at my danger, but had not power to fly: — he saw my sufferings, and had compassion on me. —Must I not cherish him to whom I owe more than life!

Had that been my only care, remaining with him, do not imagine I should ever have thought of going! for what is life without him? Happy should I have been to die for him! But, condemned to be the cause of his misery and my own, without daring to complain, or console him; to be daily exposed to struggle, not only against him, but also against myself; to employ my cares to bring him to anguish, when I would devote my days to make him happy: such a life is worse than a thousand deaths; yet this is to be my fate: I will still reso-

resolutely bear up against it. And do you, who I have chosen for a mother, receive my solemn vow to observe it.

Receive also another, of never concealing any of my actions from you. I beseech you to accept it. I demand it as a necessary aid to my conduct. I shall be engaged to relate you all; I shall think myself in your presence; your virtue will assist my weakness. I will never consent to shame in your sight; and by means of this powerful restraint, whilst I cherish the indulgent friend, the confidant of my weakness, I shall reverence my tutelar angel that guards me from shame.

It is experiencing it too fatally, to be compelled to this requisition. Oh, the unhappy effect of presumptuous confidence! Why did I not oppose sooner this growing inclination? Why did I flatter myself with being able to conquer it at my pleasure? Senseless wretch! Little did I know the power of

of love! Ah! had I struggled against it with more care, it would not have overpowered me. This sudden departure would have been unnecessary; or, even being compelled to this painful step, I might not have been forced to break a connection, which might have been less frequent. But to lose all at once, and for ever! — Oh, my dear friend! — I forget myself, and again wander in criminal wishes. Let us part; and, at least, let me expiate by my sacrifice those involuntary injuries.

Adieu, most respectable friend! Love me as a daughter; adopt me as one; and be assured, notwithstanding my weakness, I would rather die than be unworthy that name.

Oct. 3, 17—,
One in the morning.

LETTER CIII.

Madame de ROSEMOND *to the Presidente de* TOURVEL.

I WAS more afflicted, my lovely dear, at your departure, than surprized at the cause; long experience, and my concern for you, had sufficiently informed me the state of your heart; and to sum up all, you have told me almost nothing in your letter but what I feared. Was I to depend on it for information, I should still be ignorant who it is you love; for in speaking of *him* all the time, you never once mention his name. It was not necessary; too well I know who it is. This I remark only, because I recollect, it always has been the language of love. I see things are the same as they were formerly.

I little imagined my thoughts would ever be called back to things so foreign to my age, and so much out of my memory. Since yesterday, however, my mind has been much taken up with it, in order to find out something that may be useful to you. What can I then do, but admire and pity you? I am charmed with your proceeding; yet terrified because you thought it indispensable; and when things have gone so far, it is a difficult matter to avoid those our hearts are continually drawing us towards.

However, you must not be discouraged; nothing is impossible to such a virtuous mind; and were you ever to yield, (which God forbid!) you will at least, my lovely dear, have the consolation of having resisted with all your might; moreover, what human wisdom cannot accomplish, the divine grace operates when it pleases. You are, perhaps, now at the eve of your deli-

deliverance; and your virtue, which has been tried in those dreadful conflicts, will arise more pure and refined. The strength which forsakes you to-day, you must hope for to-morrow. Do not, however, depend on it; use it only as an incentive to encourage you to employ all your own.

Leaving to Providence the care of assisting you in a danger where I can bring no prevention, I reserve to myself that of supporting and consoling you as much as in my power. I cannot relieve your troubles, but I will share them. On those conditions I will accept your confidence. I know your heart wants to be disburthened; I offer you my own; age has not so far frozen it, as to leave it insensible to friendship: you will always find it open to receive you. This is a poor relief to your distress, but you shall not, however, weep alone; and when this

this unhappy passion overpowers you, and obliges you to speak, it will be better it should be with me than *him*. Now I speak as you do; and I believe between us both we shall not be able to name him, but we understand each other.

I do not know whether I do right in telling you he appeared amazingly affected at your sudden departure; it would, perhaps, be better not to mention it: but I am not fond of that prudence that afflicts one's friends. I am obliged to stop short on that subject; for the weakness of my sight and a trembling hand will not indulge long letters, when I am under the necessity of writing them myself.

Adieu, my lovely dear! Adieu, my amiable child! I adopt you freely as a daughter. You have every accomplishment to fill a mother's heart with pride and pleasure.

Oct. 3, 17—.

LET-

LETTER CIV.

The Marchioness de MERTEUIL *to Madame de* VOLANGES.

IT was with some difficulty, my dear worthy friend, I could suppress an impulse of pride on reading your letter. You honour me, then, with your full confidence; you even condescend to ask my advice. I should be completely happy if I merited this favourable opinion; or, that it did not proceed from the prepossession of your friendship. Whatever may be the motive, it is so flattering, that having obtained it, I shall endeavour more ardently to deserve it. I shall then, but without presuming to advise, tell you freely my thoughts. I own I am diffident of them, as they differ from

your's;

your's; yet, when you have my reasons, you will then judge, and if they should not meet with your approbation, I declare beforehand I submit. I shall, at least, be so prudent as not to think myself wiser than you. However, for this once, if my opinion should have the preference, you will find the cause in the facility of maternal fondness. With you we must look for so laudable an inclination, and readily recognize it in the measure you are inclined to embrace. Thus if you sometimes err, it is always on the side of virtue.

When we are to decide on the lot of others, but more especially, when the question is to fix it by a sacred and indissoluble band, such as marriage, prudence, I think, ought to take place of all other considerations. It is then an equally wise and tender mother should, as you well observe, *assist her daughter with her own expe-*

 rience.

rience. I ask then, how is she to attain it, but by making a distinction between what is pleasing and what convenient.

Would it not be debasing maternal authority, nay even annihilating it, to make it subservient to a frivolous inclination, whose illusive power is felt only by those that dread it, and immediately vanishes when contemptuously treated? For my part, I must own I never believed in those irresistible, impetuous passions, which one would imagine the world has adopted, as an universal excuse for their irregularities. I cannot conceive how a passion, that one moment creates, and the next destroys, can overpower the unalterable principles of chastity, decency and modesty; nor how a woman, that has relinquished them, can be justified by a pretended passion, no more than a robber for a thirst for money, or a murderer for a desire of revenge.

revenge. Where is the person who has not had their struggles? I have been always persuaded, inclination was sufficient for resistance, and experience has confirmed my opinion. Of what estimation would virtue be, without the obligations it imposes? Its worship are our sacrifices, its reward in our hearts. Those incontestable truths can be denied only by those whose interest it is to forget them; and who being already contaminated, hope to carry on the illusion, and justify their bad conduct by worse reasoning.

But is this to be apprehended from an innocent timid child; from a child of your's, whose pure and modest education is strengthened by a happy disposition? Still it is to this apprehension, which I will venture to call very humiliating for your daughter, you would give up an advantageous match your prudence had provided. I have

a great friendſhip for Danceny; and you know for ſome time paſt I have ſeldom ſeen M. de Gercourt: but my friendſhip for the one, nor my indifference for the other, can prevent me from obſerving the immenſe difference between the two matches.

As to birth, I agree with you, they are on an equality: but the one is deficient in fortune, and the other's is ſuch as, excluſive of blood, is ſufficient to raiſe him to the higheſt employments. I acknowledge, happineſs may be independant of fortune; but we muſt alſo own it a very neceſſary ingredient. You ſay, Mademoiſelle de Volanges is rich enough for both; yet ſixty thouſand livres per annum, which ſhe is to poſſeſs, will not be too much for one who bears the name of Danceny, to furniſh and keep up a houſe ſuitable to it. Thoſe are not Madame de Sévigné's days. Luxury abſorbs every thing; we blame,

blame, yet imitate it; and our superfluities end in depriving us of necessaries. As to personal accomplishments, which you with great reason dwell much on, certainly on that point M. de Gercourt is irreproachable, which he has already proved. I am fond of thinking, and really believe Danceny is not his inferior; but are we so certain of it? It is true, hitherto he appears untainted with the follies of the age, and notwithstanding the ton of the day, he shows a taste for good company, which inclines one to judge favourably of him. Yet who knows whether this apparent discretion is not the result of the mediocrity of his income? To be a gamester or a libertine, money must be had; or if there should be a tincture of knavery or epicurism, one may be fond of the defects, and still dread their excess. There are thousands who are admitted into good company

because they have no other employment.

I do not say, God forbid I should! that I believe such things of him: yet there is some danger; and if the event should not answer your expectations, how you would reproach yourself! What reply could you make to your daughter, who would probably say, "Mother, I was young and "unexperienced; I was even led "astray by an error excusable at "my age: Providence, which had "foreseen my incapacity, had given "me a prudent mother to preserve "me. How is it then, that laying "your discretion aside, you have con-"sented to make me unhappy? Was "I to chuse a husband, I who knew "nothing of a married state? If even "I was determined on it, should you "not have opposed it? But I never "was possessed with that foolish self "will. Determined to obey you, I

 "waited

"waited with respectful veneration
"your choice. Did I ever swerve
"from my submission? Yet now I
"suffer the afflictions due to rebel-
"lious children only. Your weak-
"ness has been my ruin." Perhaps
her respect might stifle those com-
plaints; but your maternal love would
discover them; and your daughter's
tears, though concealed, would still
overwhelm your heart.

Where then will you seek consola-
tion? Will it be in this ridiculous
passion, against which you should have
guarded her, by which you even suffer
yourself to be seduced?

Perhaps I may, my dear friend,
conceive too strong a prejudice against
this attachment: I view it in a for-
midable light, even in case of a mar-
riage. Not that I disapprove a de-
cent and pure intention should em-
bellish the matrimonial bands, to sof-
ten in some measure the obligations it

requires: but he is not the man appointed to tie them; it is not an illusory moment that ought to regulate our choice for life: for to choose well, we ought to compare; how then is it possible, when our imaginations are engrossed by a sole object; when that object cannot even be investigated, as we are plunged in intoxication and blindness? I have often, I assure you, fallen in with women attacked by this dangerous disorder; some of them I have been in confidence with: hear them speak, their lovers were in every degree all perfection; but those perfections were confined to their imaginations only. Their exalted ideas dress at pleasure those they prefer; they dream of nothing but excellence and virtue; it is the drapery of an angel often worn by an abject model: be him as he may, they have no sooner adorned him, than, dupes to their

their own labour, they fall down and adore him.

Your daughter, then, does not love Danceny, or, she is fascinated by this same illusion; and if they mutually love, they both experience the same. Thus your reason for uniting them is reduced to a certainty that they do not know each other, but also, that they never can know each other. I think I hear you say, "Can M. de "Gercourt and my daughter know "each other better?" No, certainly; but at least they do not mistake themselves; they are not sufficiently acquainted together. What then happens between a couple that I suppose decent? Why they study to please, observe, seek, and find out soon what inclinations or desires they must relinquish, for their mutual tranquillity. Those small self denials give but little uneasiness, as they are foreseen, and are reciprocal; they are soon con-

verted into mutual good will; and custom, which ever ſtrengthens all inclinations it does not deſtroy, gradually leads to that ſincere friendſhip, that tender confidence, which, when united with eſteem, forms, I think, the true ſolid happineſs of the married ſtate.

The illuſions of love, I will allow, are more engaging; but don't we well know they are not ſo laſting? And what dangers does not their deſtruction bring on! Then the moſt trivial faults become ſhocking and intollerable, being contraſted with the ideas of perfection which had ſeduced us. Each then thinks the other is only altered, and they themſelves of as much worth as in the firſt inſtant the error took its riſe. They are aſtoniſhed they can no longer create the charm they experienced; they are humbled; vanity is hurt, the mind is ſoured, injuries augmented, which bring on peeviſh-

ness, and is succeeded by hatred; thus frivolous pleasures are repaid by long misfortunes.

I have now given you, my dear friend, my thoughts on this subject. I do not insist on them, only lay them before you:—you are to decide. Should you persist in your opinion, I shall only beg to know the reasons that combat mine. I shall be happy to be set right by you, and, above all, to be made easy on the fate of that lovely child, whose happiness I so ardently wish, not only for my particular friendship for her, but also for that which unites me to you for ever.

Paris, Oct. 4, 17—.

LETTER CV.

The Marchioness de MERTEUIL *to* CECILIA VOLANGES.

WELL, my dear little creature, you are very much vexed and ashamed; and this same Valmont is a wicked man, is he not? How is all this? He dared behave to you as he would to the woman he loved best! He has taught you what you was going mad to know! Upon my word, such proceedings are unpardonable. And you, like a good girl, would have kept your chastity for your lover, who would not attempt it; you cherish the torments of love only, but not its pleasures. Why this is charming; and you will make a conspicuous figure in a romance. Love, misfortunes,

and virtue in abundance! Lord! what a deal of fine things! In the midst of this brilliant train, it is true, one may have nothing to do, but they may repay themselves.

How the poor little thing is to be pitied! her eyes were sunk the next morning! What will you say, then, when your lover's will be so? My dear angel, you will not be always so; all men are not Valmonts: and again; not dare lift up your eyes! Oh, there you was very right; every one would have read your adventure in them. Believe me, however, if it was so, our women and our young ladies even would assume more modest countenances.

Notwithstanding the praises you perceive I am obliged to give you, yet you must agree you failed in your master piece, which was to tell all to your mama. You had begun so well; you had flung yourself in her arms;

you

you sobbed and cried. What a pathetic scene! What a pity you did not compleat it! Your tender mama, overjoyed, and to assist your virtue, would have shut you up in a convent for life; and there you might have loved Danceny as much as you pleased, without a rival, and without any sin: you might be afflicted at your leisure; Valmont would not certainly have come to trouble your affliction with his naughty amusements.

But seriously, is it possible to be so childish, and turned of fifteen, as you are! You are much in the right to say, you are scarcely worthy my care; yet I wish to be your friend: you want one with the mother you have, and the husband she intends for you; but if you do not improve more, what can one make of you? What can be hoped, if what gives girls sense and understanding, deprives you of them.

If

If you could once bring yourself to reflect for a moment, you would soon discover, you should rather congratulate yourself than grieve: but you are ashamed; and that hurts you. Compose yourself; the shame that follows love is like the pain; you suffer it but once. It may be feigned afterwards, but is never felt: and yet the pleasure remains, and you will own that is of consequence. I think I can even pick out among your nonsense, you lay some stress on it. Come, be honest; that uneasiness that prevented *you from doing as you said*; that made you find it *so difficult to struggle*; that made you, as it were, *vexed*, when Valmont went away; was it shame or pleasure occasioned it? And *his manner of speaking, to which one did not know how to answer*, did it not proceed from *his manner of doing*? Ah, little girl! you tell a lie to your friend; that's not right: but enough of that.

What above every thing to any one else is nothing more than pleasure, in your situation is real happiness. Being so circumstanced with a mother, whose affection is of so much importance, and a lover whom you wish ever to enjoy, can you not plainly see the only means to unite successfully those opposite interests is to bring in a third? Drawn off by this new adventure, whilst you will seem to your mama to sacrifice submissively to her will, a passion that was not agreeable to her, you will establish with your lover the honour of having made a fine resistance. Assuring him constantly of your affections, you must not grant him the convincing proofs. Those refusals, which are so trifling in your situation, he will not fail to attribute to virtue; he may, perhaps, repine, but his love will increase; and to enjoy the double merit of sacrificing to the one your affection, and

to the other only to resist its force, it will cost nothing more than the enjoyment of its delights. How many women have lost their reputation, who would have anxiously preserved it, had they such a field.

Does not this scheme appear the most feasible as well as the most delightful to you? Do you know what you have got by the one you have taken? Your mama attributed your immoderate grief to your increase of love, and was so enraged, that she only waited to be convinced, in order to punish you. I have just received a letter from her. She will attempt every method to extract the avowal from yourself. She writes me, she may, perhaps, even go so far as to propose Danceny to you for a husband; and this only to make you speak out. If, seduced by this affectation of tenderness, you should open your heart, she would shut you

up

up for a long time, perhaps, for ever, to deplore at leisure your blind credulity.

This scheme she intends to execute against you must be counteracted by another. Begin, then, to be more chearful, to make her believe you do not think so much of Danceny. She will be the more easily prevailed on to believe it, as it is the usual effect of absence; and she will be the more pleased with you, as she will applaud herself for her prudence which suggested the method. If she should still have her doubts, should persist in founding you, and should come to mention matrimony, abide, like a prudent girl, in your absolute submission for you risk nothing; as to a husband, one is always as good as another; the most troublesome is not more so than a mother.

When your mama is once better pleased, she will have you married; then

then, being more free in your proceedings, you can, if you please, quit Valmont to have Danceny, or even keep both; for observe, Danceny is agreeable, it is true, but he is one of those men one can have when they please, and as often as they please; so you may be easy as to him.— Not so with Valmont; it is dangerous to quit him, and difficult to keep him; one must be very skilful, or very tractable: if you could, however, attach him as a friend, you would be happy indeed. He would elevate you to the first rank among the modish women; that is the way to gain consistency in life, and not sit blushing and crying as if your nuns had made you eat your dinner on your knees.

If you are prudent, you will then endeavour to make it up with Valmont, who must be very angry with you: as you must learn to repair your

folly,

folly, do not be afraid to make him ſome advances; you will ſoon learn, that although the men make the firſt to us, we are always obliged to make the ſecond. You will have a pretence for it, for you muſt not keep this letter; and I require you will deliver it to Valmont as ſoon as you have read it. Do not forget to ſeal it again, however, before you give it: for, in the firſt place, I want to leave the whole merit of this proceeding to yourſelf, that it ſhould not carry the appearance of an advice; moreover, I do not know any one I have ſo much friendſhip for, as to write as I do to you.

Adieu! my charming angel! follow my advice, and let me know how it ſucceeds.

P. S. Now I think on't, I had like to forget — A word more — Take a little more care in your ſtile of writing; you

you always write so like a child;—I know from whence it proceeds; you always write as you think, but do not study what you ought to say: that may do very well between you and me, who should not have any secrets from one another; but with every one else, particularly with your lover, it looks so foolish. You must observe, when you write to any one, it is for them, and not for yourself: you must endeavour, then, to write to please them, and not give them your thoughts.

Adieu! my heart! I embrace you, instead of being angry, in hopes you will be more rational.

Paris, Oct. 4, 17—

LET-

LETTER CVI.

The Marchioness de Merteuil *to the Viscount de* Valmont.

Admirable, my dear Viscount! now I love you to distraction; after the first of your two letters, I might well expect the second, which did not much surprize me; although you were so proud of your future success as to sollicit the reward, and ask me if I was ready, I foresaw there was no necessity for all that expedition. Yes, upon honour, perusing the recital of your tender scene, that had *affected you so much*; and reflecting on your modesty, worthy the most glorious days of chivalry, I exclaimed, "The opportunity is "lost!" How could it be otherwise? What

What would you have a poor woman do, who surrenders, and will not be accepted? Why, faith, in such a circumstance, appearances must be saved, and that is only what your Presidente has done. For my part, I very well know, the step she has taken has its effect, and intend to follow the example on the first serious occasion that offers; but I swear, if whoever I take this trouble for does not make a better use of it than you have done, he may certainly renounce me for ever.

Thus are you reduced, positively, to a meer nothing! by two women, one of which was fixed for the next day, and the other wished for nothing so much! Well, you will be apt to think I boast, and say it is easy to prophecy after the event; but I swear I expected it; for you really have no genius for your profession; you barely know what you have learned; you have no invention;

when

when circumſtances do not aſſiſt your formalities of cuſtom, and you are obliged to go out of the common road, you ſtop ſhort like a ſchool-boy; to ſum up all, a childiſhneſs on the one hand, a return of prudery on the other, becauſe they are not every day experienced, are enough to diſconcert you; you neither know how to remedy or prevent them. Ah, Viſcount! Viſcount! you teach me not to judge men by their ſucceſs, and we muſt ſoon ſay of you, "he was "brave ſuch a day." When you commit blunder on blunder, why then you fly to me—One would imagine I have nothing elſe to do but retrieve your follies: it is certainly work enough for any one perſon.

However, as to thoſe two adventures; the one was undertaken contrary to my inclination,—the other, as you have paid ſome attention to my wiſhes, I take on myſelf.

Read

Read first the inclosed letter, then give it to the little Volanges; it is more than sufficient to recal her; but I beg you will pay some attention to this child; let us join together to make her the greatest curse and affliction of her mother and Gercourt: there is no danger in giving her large doses; I see plainly the little thing will not be frightened; and, our scheme once compleated, she may act as she pleases.

I shall be totally unconcerned about her. I had some thoughts of making her a subaltern intriguer, to take her to play the second parts under me; but I perceive she has no genius; she has a kind of foolish openness that has not given way to the specific you administered, which, however, seldom fails; and, in my opinion, it is the most dangerous disorder a woman can possibly have; it marks, more than any thing, a weakness of temper, which

opposes every thing, and which is almost always incurable; so that our time would be lost in forming this little girl for intrigue, as, at best, she never will be more than a comeatable woman. I don't know any thing so insipid, as that stupid facility, that makes a woman compliant without knowing why or wherefore, only because she is attacked, and knows not how to resist; those sort of women are absolutely mere machines. You will say, that is all we want; and that is sufficient for our purpose. Be it so: but it must not be forgot, that every one soon becomes acquainted with the springs and contrivers of those machines; so that to use this one, without bad consequences, we must lose no time, stop when necessary, and afterwards break it. We shall not be at a loss to get rid of her, and Gercourt will be ready to cloister her when we please. When he can no

longer doubt his disaster, when it will be public and notorious, what matters it us if he revenges himself, provided he is inconsolable? What I say of the husband, I dare say you think the same of the mother; therefore look it as done.

This measure, which I conceive to be the best, attracted my thoughts, made me resolve to lead on the young thing briskly, as you will perceive by my letter; it is also of the utmost consequence not to leave any thing in her possession that may commit us, which I beg you will attend to. This precaution observed, I take the morality on myself; the remainder is in your department; however, if we should hereafter find she improves, we shall always have time to alter our plan; which had like to have been the case, and that we should one time or other have been employed at what we are

now about; but at all events our labour will not be loſt.

I muſt, however, tell you, mine had like to be deſtroyed; and Gercourt's good fortune had nearly overpowered my prudence. Madame de Volanges, in a fit of maternal fondneſs, was on the point of giving away her daughter to Danceny; from thence proceeded the remarkable tenderneſs you obſerved the *next morning*. This would have been ſtill one of your maſter ſtrokes. Fortunately the tender parent conſulted me about it; and I expect my anſwer will give her a diſreliſh to it. I ſaid ſo much in praiſe of virtue, and wheedled her ſo well, that I am ſure ſhe will be pleaſed with my reaſons.

I am ſorry I had not time to take a copy of my letter, for your edification, on the auſterity of my morals. You would there ſee how contemptible I hold thoſe women of depraved

 prin-

principles who have lovers. Nothing ſo commodious, as to be a rigouriſt in converſation ; it only hurts others, and gives us no uneaſineſs. Moreover, I am informed the good lady has had her little foibles, as well as others, in her younger days. I was not ſorry to humble her conſcience, at leaſt; which was ſome conſolation for the praiſes I was obliged to give her againſt my own. It was thus, in the ſame letter, the idea of hurting Gercourt inſpired me the reſolution to ſpeak well of him.

Adieu, Viſcount! I approve much of your plan of remaining where you are for ſome time. I have no means for expediting your march: but I recommend you ſhould employ your time with our pupil. As to myſelf, notwithſtanding your polite ſummons, you find you muſt ſtill wait, and you will agree with me it is not my fault.

Paris, Oct. 4, 17—.

LETTER CVII.

AZOLAN *to the Viscount de* VALMONT.

SIR,

ON receipt of your orders, I immediately waited on Mr. Bertrand, your honour's steward, who paid me twenty-five louis d'ors, as your honour had ordered. I asked him for two more for Philip, who was to set off immediately, as your honour had ordered, and who had no money; but your steward would not give them, as he said he had not any order from your honour to that purpose; so I was obliged to give them to him myself, and which your honour will be pleased to observe.

Philip set out last night. I recommended it to him strongly not to leave the

the inn, that you may find him when neceſſary.

I went immediately after to Madame the Preſidente's, to ſee Mademoiſelle Julie: but ſhe was abroad, and I could only ſpeak to La Fleure, from whom I could not get any intelligence, becauſe he has been always abroad ſince his return only at meal times. It is the ſecond that has always attended table, and your honour knows I had no acquaintance with him; but I began to-day.

I returned this morning to Mademoiſelle Julie, and ſhe ſeemed very glad to ſee me. I aſked her concerning the reaſon of her miſtreſs returning to town; ſhe told me, ſhe knew nothing of it, and I believe ſhe ſpoke truth. I ſcolded her, becauſe ſhe did not tell me of their going away, and ſhe declared ſhe knew nothing of it till her miſtreſs was going to bed; ſo ſhe was obliged to ſit up to ſettle every

 thing,

thing, and the poor girl had but two hours reſt. She did not leave her miſtreſs till paſt one, and ſhe left her writing.

In the morning Madame de Tourvel left a letter with the houſekeeper. Mademoiſelle Julie does not know for who: but imagined it was for your honour, but your honour ſaid nothing of it to me. During the whole journey Madame had a great cloak over her, which hid her entirely; but Mademoiſelle Julie thinks ſhe cried very often. She did not ſpeak a word during the whole journey, and ſhe would not ſtop at —, * as ſhe did in coming; which was not very agreeable to Mademoiſelle Julie, who had not breakfaſted: but, as I ſaid, maſters will be maſters.

When they came to town, Madame went to bed for two hours. When

* The ſame village, half way on the road.

ſhe

she got up, she sent for the porter, and gave him orders not to admit any one. She did not make any toilette. She sat down to dinner, but only tasted a little soup, and went away directly. Her coffee was brought to her apartment. Madamoiselle Julie went in at the same time. She found her mistress settling some papers in her desk, and she could perceive they were letters. I would lay a wager they were your honour's; and of the three she received the same evening, there was one she had before her late the same night. I am very certain it was one from your honour: but why should she come away that way, that astonishes me; but certainly your honour knows, and it is no business of mine.

Madame the Presidente went to the library in the evening, and took two books, which she carried into her dressing room: but Mademoiselle Julie declares she did not read a quarter

of an hour the whole day, and that ſhe did nothing but read the letter, muſe, and lean on her arm. As I thought your honour would be glad to know what books they were, and that Mademoiſelle Julie did not know, I made an excuſe to go and ſee the library to day: there is no void but for two books; one is the ſecond volume of Chriſtian Thoughts, and the other the firſt book of a work entitled Clariſſa. I write as it was before me; your honour will certainly know what it is.

Laſt night Madame had no ſupper, only took tea. This morning ſhe rung early, and ordered her carriage immediately, and went before nine to maſs at the Fenillant's. She wanted to go to confeſſion, but her confeſſor was not in the way, and will not return for eight or ten days. I thought it neceſſary to inform your honour of this. She then came home, breakfaſted, and

ſat down to write, and ſtayed at it till near one o'clock. I then found an opportunity of doing what your honour wiſhed moſt for, for I carried the letters to the poſt office. There was none for Madame de Volanges; but I ſend your honour one for Monſieur the Preſident; I thought that might be the moſt neceſſary. There was one alſo for Madame de Roſemonde; but I thought your honour might ſee that whenever you had a mind, and I let it go. Beſides, your honour will know all, as Madame the Preſidente has wrote to him. Hereafter I can have all your honour pleaſes; for it is Mademoiſelle Julie that almoſt always gives them to the ſervants, and ſhe has promiſed me, that out of friendſhip to me as well as for your honour, ſhe will do every thing I would have her. She would not even take the money I offered her; but I dare ſay your honour will make her

some small present; and if it is your pleasure, and that you think proper, I shall soon know what will please her.

I hope your honour will not think me negligent in your service. I have it much at heart to be clear of the reproaches made me. It was my zeal for your honour's service was the reason of my not knowing Madame the Presidente's departure, because your honour ordered me to set out at three in the morning, which hindered me from seeing Mademoiselle Julie at night as usual, as I went to sleep with the ostler, that I might not disturb the people in the castle.

As to what your honour says, I am often in want of money, it is because I always love to be decent, as your honour may see; besides, one must keep up the honour of the livery they wear. I know very well I ought to save something for a rainy day; but I depend entirely

entirely on your honour's generosity, who has been so good a master.

As to what your honour desires, of my entering into Madame de Tourvel's service, and still remaining in your's, I hope your honour will not require it; it was quite different at the Duchess's; for I certainly cannot stoop to wear a livery, and a lawyer's livery, after having been your honour's huntsman. As for all the rest, your honour may dispose as you please of him, who is, with the greatest respect and affection, his most humble and obedient servant,

ROUX AZOLAN, *huntsman*.

Paris, Oct. 5, at night.

LET-

LETTER CVIII.

The Presidente de TOURVEL *to Madame de* ROSEMONDE.

MY dear indulgent mother, what obligations do I not lay under to you! what comfort have I not received from your letter! I have read it over and over; I cannot lay it down; to it I owe the few moments of ease I have had since my departure. Your bounty, your virtue, your prudence can, then, compassionate my weakness. You pity my misfortunes. Ah! could you but be sensible of them — they are frightful. I imagined I had experienced the pangs of love; but the most excruciating, which must be felt to have any idea of it, is to be separated from the beloved object, for

ever

ever ſeparated! — The anguiſh that ſinks me to-day will again return to-morrow, the next day, all my life! Great God! I am yet but young, what a length of ſufferings!

To be the cauſe of one's own miſery; to tear one's heart with their own hands; and during thoſe inſupportable torments, to know one can put a period to them with a word, and that word to be criminal! — Alas, my dear friend! —

When I took the painful reſolution to baniſh myſelf from him, I was flattered with the hope that abſence would increaſe my ſtrength and reſolution. How fatally am I deceived! They ſeem to have totally abandoned me. I had more to ſtruggle with, it's true: but in my reſiſtance I was not deprived of all reſource; I could ſometimes ſee him; often even not daring to look on him, I was ſenſible his eyes were fixed on me,

me, they seemed to cheer my heart. But now in my dismal solitude, separated from all my heart held dear, lonely with my misfortunes, every moment of my painful existence is marked with tears, nothing to soften their bitterness, no consolation to mingle with my sacrifices; and those I have already made, render those I still must make more sorrowful.

Even yesterday, how forcibly did I experience this! Among the letters brought me, there was one from him, which I distinguished from among the rest before they were delivered. I trembled — I rose involuntarily — scarce could conceal my emotion; and yet that state was not unpleasing. Soon after left alone, this deceitful pleasure fled, and left one more sacrifice to be made: for how could I open this letter, which I was impatient to read? Strange fatality! that the few consolations which offer

offer are so many new privations to me; which are still made more intollerable by the idea that M. de Valmont shares them.

It is out at last; that name that incessantly possesses me, that I had so much pain to write: the kind of reproach you gave me, has been truly alarming — I beseech you will be persuaded, no false shame has altered my confidence in you; — then why should I be afraid to name him? Ah! I am ashamed of my sentiments, but not of him who causes them. Where is there another so worthy to inspire them? Yet I can't account why that name does not naturally flow from my pen; and even now, I could not write it without some pause: but to return to him. You write me, he appeared *amazingly affected at my departure*. What did he say then? What did he do? Did he talk of returning to Paris? I beg you will put

him off it, if you poſſibly can. If he does me juſtice, he ought not to be angry with me for this ſtep; but he muſt be ſenſible it is an irreverſible reſolution. One of my greateſt tortures is to be ignorant of his thoughts. I ſtill have his letter there — but you will certainly agree with me, I ought not to open it.

It is only through you, my moſt indulgent friend, I ſhall not be entirely ſeparated from him. I will not abuſe your goodneſs. I know well you muſt not write long letters; but you will not refuſe a few words to your child, to aſſiſt her reſolution, and conſole her. Adieu, my moſt reſpectable friend!

Paris, Oct. 5, 17—.

LETTER CIX.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to the Marchioness de* MERTEUIL.

DEAR Madam, I did not deliver the letter you did me the honour to write me until this day to M. de Valmont. I kept it four days, often under great apprehensions lest it should be discovered, but concealed it carefully; and when a fit of dulness seized me, I locked myself up to read it again. I begin to think what I imagined so great a misfortune, is a trifling thing; I own there is a deal of pleasure in it; so that I begin to be tolerably easy. Nothing now gives me any trouble, but the idea of Danceny; I am often, that I do not think of him at all, and I believe it is because

M. de

M. de Valmont is so engaging. I made it up with him two days ago; which was not at all difficult; for before I had scarcely spoke, he said, if I had any thing to tell him, he would come to my room at night if it was agreeable to me. As soon as he came, he was as good humoured as if I had not done any thing to vex him. He did not scold me till afterwards, and then very gently, but in such a manner — just as you used to do; which convinces me, he loves me very much.

I cannot remember all the comical stories he told me, which I should never have believed, particularly about mama. I would be much obliged to you, if you would let me know if it is all true. I could not refrain from laughing; once I was ready to burst out, which frightened us both; for mama would have heard me, and then what would become of me! she would have

ſhave infallibly ſhut me up in the convent.

I muſt be prudent; and, as M. de Valmont ſays he would not run the riſk of a diſcovery for all the world, we have agreed, hereafter he will only come, open the door, and we will go to his chamber. There will be no danger then; I was there laſt night: whilſt I am writing to you, I expect him. Now, Madam, I hope you will not be angry with me. There is ſtill ſomething in your letter that ſurpriſes me a good deal; that is, in regard to Danceny and M. de Valmont when I am married. I think you told me at the opera, when once I was married, I ſhould love no one but my huſband, and I muſt even forget Danceny: may be I did not underſtand you right; and I would much rather it was otherwiſe, becauſe I ſhould not then be ſo much afraid of being married. I ſhall even wiſh for

for it, as I shall have the more liberty. I hope then matters may be so settled, that I shall have Danceny only to think of. I know very well I shall never be truly happy but with him; for the thoughts of him constantly disturb me; I have no peace but when I do not think of him, and that is not in my power; as soon as he comes in my head, I grow melancholy.

My greatest consolation is, you promise me Danceny will love me the more for it: are you very sure of it? You would not deceive me, I know; however, it is very whimsical that it should be Danceny I love, and that M. de Valmont — but, as you say, may be it is all for the better. I do not well understand what you mention about my writing. Danceny likes my letters very well: I must not say any thing to him, I know, about what

passes

paſſes between M. de Valmont and me — you need not be uneaſy about that.

Mama has not ſpoke yet about marriage; but when ſhe does, ſince it is to enſnare me, I promiſe you I will know how to tell a lie.

Adieu, my dear friend; I am very much obliged to you; I aſſure you I ſhall never forget your friendſhip: I muſt conclude, for it is almoſt one, and M. de Valmont will be here ſoon.

Oct. 10, 17—

LET-

LETTER CX.

Viscount de VALMONT *to the Marchioness de* MERTEUIL.

YE *heavenly powers! I had a soul formed for sorrow; grant me one for bliss.** I think it is the tender Saint Preux, who thus expresses himself: more equally divided than he, I at once am possessed of both. I am, my dear friend, at once very happy and very miserable; since you are entirely in my confidence, I will relate my pains and pleasures.

My ungrateful devotee still perseveres in her inflexibility; she has returned me four letters unopened—not four neither, for guessing that after the

* New Heloise.

the first, it would be followed by another, I resolved not to lose my time thus, to make my mournful complaints as common-place without a date, and since the second post, it is always the same letter goes and comes, I only change the cover. If my fair one ends as fair ones generally do, and will relent, at least through fatigue; she will at length keep it: then will be the time to renew the correspondence; you may guess this new method hurts my intelligence.— I have, however discovered the fickle woman has changed her confidant; I am certain at least since her leaving the castle, she has not wrote to M. de Volanges; but has twice wrote to old Rosemonde. As she has not said any thing of it to us, and does not even mention her *dear fair one*, who she was incessantly talking of, I concluded she is appointed successor: I conjecture the

necessity of talking of me on the one hand,and the shame of again assuming with Madame de Volanges, a subject so long disavowed, have produced this grand revolution: I am apprehensive I shall lose by the change; for the older women grow, the more morose and severe they are: the first would have said every thing evil of me, but the other will say more of the evils of love; and the sensible prude is more afraid of the passion than the Person. The only method to be informed is, as you will observe, to put a stop to the clandestine trade; I have already given my huntsman ample directions, and am hourly in expectation; until then, chance rules all. For these last eight days I have run over all manner of known methods, as also those of romances and secret memoirs, and cannot find a precedent neither for the circumstances of the adventure, or character of the heroine.

The

The difficulty does not lie in getting into her houſe, even at night, or even to ſet her aſleep as in Clariſſa, but after two months of care and trouble, to be obliged to recur to ſuch ſtrange methods; follow the track others have left, and triumph without glory!---No, ſhe ſhall not have *the pleaſure of vice and the honour of virtue.** It is not enough to poſſeſs her, ſhe ſhall give herſelf up: to compaſs this, I muſt not only get in to her houſe, with her conſent; find her alone, and inclined to liſten to me; above all, blind her on her danger, for if ſhe perceives it, ſhe will overcome it or periſh. The more convinced I am what is neceſſary to be done, the greater I find the difficulties in the execution; were you again to ridicule me, I will confeſs my embarraſſment increaſes the more I think of it.

* New Heloiſe.

I really believe I ſhould have gone mad, were it not for the pleaſing diſtraction our pupil gives me; my recreations with her are an antidote to melancholy.

Would you believe it was three whole days before your letter had any effect on the little terrified creature? Thus one falſe idea is capable of deſtroying the beſt diſpoſition.

At length on Saturday ſhe came about, began to mutter a few words, in ſuch a low tone, and ſo inarticulate, with ſhame no doubt, it was almoſt impoſſible to underſtand her: her bluſhes, however, declared the buſineſs; until then, I aſſumed a conſequential air, but ſoon ſoftened by ſo pleaſing a repentance, I condeſcended to promiſe the pretty penitent, to go to her at night; this favour was accepted with all the gratitude due to ſo great a kindneſs.

As

As I never lose sight of your schemes or my own, I resolved not to neglect this opportunity of coming at the intrinsic value of this child, also to accelerate her education. To be more at liberty to prosecute this business, it was necessary to change the place of rendezvous, for as there is only a closet which separates her room from that of her mother's, she could not think herself sufficiently safe to indulge at her ease: I was determined then to contrive *innocently*, some noise which should frighten her, and make her resolve in future to accept a place of more safety, but she saved me the trouble.

The little thing laughs much, and to keep up her spirits, I took it in my head between the acts, to tell her some scandalous adventures that occurred to me; to give them a greater relish, and fix her attention the more, I put them all to her mother's account,

who I loaded with vice and folly. My design in this, was to encourage my timid scholar, and inspire her with a most despicable opinion of her mother. I have always observed, that if this method was not always necessary for the seduction of a young girl, it is indispensable, even the most efficacious, to vitiate her; for she who has no respect for her mother, will never have any for herself: this moral truth, which I think so useful, I am glad to illustrate by an example to corroborate the precept. But your pupil, who did not dream of the moral, was every moment ready to burst with laughing, and once had like to have broke out. I had no difficulty to persuade, her she made a great noise; I seemed much alarmed, so did she: that it might make the impression more forcible, I did not suffer pleasure to make its appearance again, but left her three hours sooner than

usual, after having agreed to meet the next night in my chamber. I have already received her twice: in this short interval, the scholar is almost as learned as the master: yes, upon my word I have taught her every thing as far as the compliances: I have concealed nothing but the precautions.

Being thus engaged all night, I sleep the greatest part of the day; and as, in the present state of the castle, I have nothing to attract me, I scarcely appear an hour in the day in the saloon. To-day I have taken the resolution to eat in my room—shall only leave it now and then for a short walk: those oddities will be imputed to my health; I have declared I was *devoured with spleen*; I have also talked of a little fever; it will be sufficient to speak in a weak and languid voice to make that go down; and for an alteration in my countenance, rely on your pupil, *love will provide*

*for it.** My leisure hours are taken up with the means of regaining the advantages I have lost over my ingrate, in composing a catechism of debauchery for the use of my scholar, wherein I call every thing by its technical name; I anticipate my joy on the very affecting conversation it will furnish between Gercourt and she the first night after their marriage. Nothing can be more diverting than the ingenuousness with which she expresses what little she knows of this language; she does not think people ought to speak otherwise; this is really enchanting; this contrast of simple candour, with the stile of barefaced impudence, has its effect; and I do not know how it is, but of late nothing pleases me but oddities.

I give too much way perhaps to this, as I commit my time and health; but I hope my feigned sick-

* Regnard's Amorous Follies.

ness

neſs may, beſides ſaving me the diſagreeable tedíouſneſs of the ſaloon, be of ſervice with my auſtere devotee, whoſe ferocious virtue is ſtill allied to tender ſenſibility! I make no doubt ſhe is by this time informed of this great event, and I have a ſtrong deſire to know how ſhe takes it, as I would venture to lay a wager ſhe will take the honour of it to herſelf; I ſhall regulate the ſtate of my health according to the impreſſion it makes on her. Now, my charming friend, you have my whole ſtory: I wiſh to have more intereſting news for you; and I hope you will be perſuaded, that I reckon on the reward I expect from you as a great ſhare in the pleaſure I promiſe myſelf.

Oct. 11, 17.—

LETTER CXI.

Count GERCOURT *to Madame de* VOLANGES.

EVERY thing in this country, Madam, has the most pacific appearance, and we daily expect orders to return to France. I hope you have not the least doubt of my eagerness for this return, to compleat my union with Mademoiselle de Volanges and you. Yet the Duke of ——, my cousin, to whom you know I am under so many obligations, has just informed me of his recal from Naples. He writes me, his intention to come by Rome, and take in his way that part of Italy he has not seen. He requests I should accompany him on this journey, which will be of six weeks or two months. I will not conceal from you, it would be very agreeable to me to embrace this

this opportunity. For when once married, I ſhall not readily undertake any journeys but thoſe the ſervice will require; perhaps, it would be alſo more convenient to poſtpone the ceremony until winter, as all my relations will not be in Paris until then, particularly the Marquis de ——, to whom I am indebted for the hope of being allied to you. Notwithſtanding thoſe conſiderations, my reſolutions on this matter ſhall be entirely governed by yours; and if you are not perfectly ſatisfied with this propoſal, I inſtantly renounce mine. I only requeſt you will do me the favour to inform me of your intentions. I ſhall wait your anſwer here, which will regulate my conduct.

I am, with great reſpect, and every ſentiment due from a ſon,

your moſt humble ſervant,

Count de GERCOURT.

Baſtia, Oct. 10, 17—.

LETTER CXII.

Madame de ROSEMOND *to the Presidente de* TOURVEL.

(Dictated only.)

THIS instant, my lovely dear, I received your letter of the 11th,* and the mild reproaches it contains. You must confess you intended to make many more; if you had not recollected my title of mother, you would have given me a scolding. That would have been very unjust. It was my hope and wish, to have been able to answer you myself, which made me defer it daily; yet, after all, you see I am obliged to employ my waiting woman's hand, to do me that office.

* This letter was never found.

The

The abominable rheumatiſm has again ſeized me; it has this time taken its reſidence in my right arm, ſo I am abſolutely deprived of its uſe. This is the conſequence of ſuch a young blooming creature's having old friends; they ſuffer from our diſorders.

As ſoon as my pains will give me any relief, aſſure yourſelf I will have a long chat with you. In the mean time I muſt acquaint you, I received both your letters. If it was poſſible, they would have redoubled my friendſhip for you; and that I ſhall never ceaſe taking a lively ſhare in every thing that concerns you.

My nephew is alſo a little indiſpoſed; but it is not of any conſequence, and need not give any uneaſineſs. It is a ſlight indiſpoſition, which ſeems to affect his temper more than his health. We ſcarcely ever ſee him now.

His

His retreat, and your departure, will not much enliven our little circle. The little Volanges has an immense deal of chat, and yawns all day, as if she would swallow you; for these few days especially, she does us the honour to fall into a profound sleep every evening.

Adieu, my lovely dear! I am ever your sincere friend, your mama, your sister even, if my great age would allow me the title. I am, in few words, most tenderly attached to you.

Signed, ADELAIDE, *for*
Madame de ROSEMONDE.

From the castle of ——,
Oct. 14, 17—.

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LETTER CXIII.

Marchioness de MERTEUIL *to the Viscount de* VALMONT.

I THINK it time to inform you, Viscount, the world begin to talk of you. Your absence from Paris is remarked, and the cause guessed. I was yesterday at a public supper, which was very numerous; where it was positively asserted, you was detained in a village by an unfortunate romantic amour. Joy was instantly visible on the countenance of all those envious of your successes, and of all the women you have neglected. Believe me, you should not suffer such dangerous reports to gain ground, and should immediately return to destroy them by your presence.

Re-

Remember, if you once lose the reputation of irresistible, you will soon more readily find resistance; your rivals will lose the respect they had for you, and will dare you; for is there one amongst them who does not think himself more powerful than virtue? But, above all, remember, among the number of women you have held up to public view, all those you have not had, will attempt to undeceive the public, whilst the others will use every means to abuse it. To sum up all, you must expect to be rated, perhaps, as much beneath your value, as you have hitherto been above it.

Return then, Viscount, and no longer sacrifice your reputation to a puerile whim. You have done all we wanted with the little Volanges; and as for your Presidente, it is not very probable you will do your business with her at ten leagues distance. Do you imagine she will go after you?

Per-

Perhaps ſhe no longer thinks of you, or thinks of you only to felicitate herſelf for having humbled you. But here you would find ſome opportunity of appearing with eclat, and you really want it. If even you ſhould continue obſtinate in your ridiculous adventure, I can't ſee how your return would hurt you — on the contrary.

For if your Preſidente *adores you*, as you have ſo often told me, but never yet proved, her only conſolation, her ſole pleaſure, ought now to be to ſpeak of you, to know what you do, what you ſay, what you think, even the moſt trifling matter about you. Thoſe wretched fooleries are of ſome conſequence, according to the privations that are experienced. They are the crumbs falling from the table of the rich man, which he deſpiſes; but which the poor one collects with avidity, and feeds on. So the poor Preſidente at preſent receives thoſe

crumbs;

crumbs; and the more she has of them, she will be less greedy for the rest. Moreover, as you know her confidant, there is no doubt but every letter contains a little exhortation to corroborate her prudence, and strengthen her virtue. Why will you then leave resources to the one for her defence, and power to the other to hurt you.

Not that I am in the least of your opinion on the loss you think you sustain by the change of confidant; for M. de Volanges detests you, and hatred is always more ingenious and clear sighted than friendship. Your old aunt's virtue will never permit her to slander her dear nephew, for virtue has its foibles. Again, your fears lead you into an error. It is not true, that *the older women grow, the more morose and severe they are.* It is from forty to fifty that grief for faded beauties rage, to be forced to aban-

don

don pretensions and pleasures to which the mind is still attached, make almost all women peevish and ridiculous. It is necessary they should have this long interval to prepare for this great sacrifice: but when it is once compleated, they divide into two classes.

The most numerous, which are those who never possessed any thing but youth and beauty, fall into a weak apathy, from which they never recover but for play and a few practical devotions; that class is always tiresome, often morose, sometimes marplots, but rarely mischievous. It is not easy to determine whether those women are or are not severe; without ideas, or in a manner without existence, they repeat indifferently, and without comprehending, every thing they hear; and are, as to themselves, *non entities.*

The

The other class, much more uncommon, but truly valuable, are those of good disposition, who having cultivated their minds, can create themselves an existence, when nature fails; and can, when the embellishments of the outward figure are useless, place them to their minds. Those women have most commonly a sound judgment, and a mind replete with solidity, good humour, and kindness.— They replace the seducing charms with attractive goodness and chearfulness, whose charms increase with their years. Thus they may be said in some shape to renew their age, by gaining the affections of the youthful part of society. But far from being what you call *morose and severe*; the habits of indulgence, the long reflections on human nature, but especially the remembrance of youth, by which alone they have a relish for life, would rather make them too condescending.

I can

I can aver, having always cultivated an intimacy with old women, of whoſe good opinion I ſaw early the advantage, I have known ſeveral who I frequented as much from inclination as intereſt. I ſhall ſtop here; for I dread you ſhould fall in love with your old aunt, you are ſo apt to be inflamed ſuddenly and morally, and bury yourſelf with her in the tomb you have ſo long dwelt in.

But to return. Although you ſeem enraptured with your little ſcholar, I fancy ſhe has no ſhare in your projects. You found her ready to your hand, and took her: be it ſo. But that cannot be called taſte. It is not even, properly ſpeaking, an enjoyment; you poſſeſs her perſon only. Not to mention her heart, which I ſuppoſe does not give you the leaſt uneaſineſs, you don't even engage her imagination. I cannot tell whether you have obſerved it, but I have a proof

proof of it in the laſt letter ſhe wrote me: I ſend it you, that you may be convinced. Obſerve, always when ſhe mentions you, it is *M. de Valmont*; all her ideas, even thoſe you raiſe, terminate in Danceny; ſhe does not call him Monſieur, but plain Danceny. Thus ſhe diſtinguiſhes him from all others: and even giving herſelf up to you, ſhe familiariſes herſelf only with him. If ſuch a conqueſt has any thing *bewitching*, if the pleaſures you receive are ſo *attaching*, you are certainly modeſt, and not difficult to pleaſe. Keep her; I agree to it; it is even a part of my ſcheme: but I really think it ſhould not diſcompoſe you in the leaſt. You ſhould alſo have ſome aſcendant over her, and not ſuffer her to draw near Danceny, until he is a little worn out of her memory.

Before I think of your coming to me, I muſt tell you this pretended ſickneſs is an exploded common trick.

On

On my word, Viſcount, you lack invention! I am alſo guilty of repetitions ſometimes, as you ſhall hear: but I endeavour to amuſe by the circumſtances; and ſucceſs juſtifies me. I am going to attempt another adventure. I will agree, it has not the merit of difficulty; but it will be a diſtraction at leaſt, for time lies very heavy on my hands.

I cannot account for the reaſon, but ſince Prevan's affair, Belleroche is become inſupportable to me. He has redoubled his attention, tenderneſs, and *veneration*, to ſo violent a degree, I can hold out no longer. His wrath at the time was pleaſant enough; but it was neceſſary to check it, otherwiſe I muſt have committed myſelf; there was no making him liſten to reaſon. I reſolved to ſhew him more affection, to bring him round more eaſily; he has taken it ſo ſeriouſly, that ever ſince he puts me out of all patience

with

with his eternal charms. I moreover take notice of his insulting confidence, for he really looks on me as his property. I am really humbled. He holds me cheap, indeed, if he thinks himself capable of fixing me. He had the assurance to tell me lately, I never should have loved any other but him. Then, indeed, I lost all patience, and was obliged to call my prudence in aid, not to undeceive him instantly, by telling how matters stood. He is certainly a pretty fellow, to aspire to an exclusive right! I will allow, he is well made, and a tolerable person: but take him all in all, he is only a manœuverer in love. The time is come, we must part.

I have endeavoured at it this fortnight past. I have, by turns, treated him with coolness, capriciousness, bad humour, quarrelled even; all in vain: the tenacious creature will not quit his hold. I must, then, use some

violence; for this purpose I take him with me to the country. We set out the day after to-morrow. We shall only have some people of no consequence, and not very discerning, and shall be almost as much at liberty as if we were alone. There I shall so overload him with love and fondness, we shall so live for each other only, that he will wish to see the end of this journey, which is now his greatest bliss, more than I shall; and if he does not return more tired of me than I shall be of him, I consent you may say, you know more of the matter than I do.

The pretence for this retreat is, I want seriously to employ my time in preparing for my great law suit, that is to be decided the beginning of winter, which pleases me much; for it is really very disagreeable to have one's fortune in suspense. Not that I am uneasy about the issue; for,

first, I have right on my side, as all my lawyers assure me; — if it even was not the case, I should be very unskilful, indeed, if I could not gain a suit against minors of tender years, and their old guardian: however, as nothing must be omitted in a business of such consequence, I shall have two lawyers with me. Will not this be a sprightly jaunt? If I gain my cause, and lose Belleroche, I shall not regret the time.

Now, Viscount, I will give you a hundred guesses before you name his successor; I forget though, you never guess any thing — Why, Danceny. You are astonished; for I am not yet reduced to the education of children. This one, however, deserves an exception in his favour. He has the graces of youth, but not its frivolousness. His reserve in a circle is well adapted to banish all manner of suspicion, and he is the more amiable

when in a tête-a-tête; not that I yet have had one with him on my own account. I am only his confidant: but under this mask of friendship, I think I see a strong inclination for me, and I already feel a violent one for him. It would be pity so much wit and delicacy should be sacrificed and stupified with that little ideot Volanges. I hope he deceives himself in thinking he loves her; she is so far from deserving him. Not that I have the least tincture of jealousy: but it would be murder; and I wish to save Danceny. I therefore beg, Viscount, you will use your endeavours that he may not come near his Cecilia, as he has got the disagreeable custom of calling her. A first liking has always an inconceivable power. If he was now to see her, I could not be certain of any thing, especially during my absence. At my

return, I shall take every thing on myself, and will answer for the success.

I had some notion of taking the young man with me; but sacrificed my inclination to my usual prudence: moreover, I should have been apprehensive he might make some observations on Belleroche and me; an idea even of such a thing would distract me; as I wish to offer myself immaculate to his imagination; such as one should be to be worthy of him.

Paris, Oct. 15, 17—.

LETTER CXIV.

The Presidente de TOURVEL *to Madame de* ROSEMONDE.

MY dear friend, my uneasiness for the state of your health is so great, I cannot forbear writing to you. Without

out knowing whether you will be able to anſwer me, I cannot avoid interrogating you. M. de Valmont's ſtate, which you tell me *is not dangerous*, does not, however, diſpel my apprehenſions ſo much as it does your's. It is no novelty that melancholy and a diſtaſte for company ſhould be ſymptoms of an approaching diſeaſe; bodily diſorders, as well as thoſe of the mind, incline us to ſolitude; and we often load thoſe with ill temper, whoſe diſorder we ought to compaſſionate.

I think he ought, at leaſt, conſult with ſome one. How happens it, that being yourſelf indiſpoſed, you have not a phyſician? Mine, who I ſent for this morning, and whom, for I will not conceal it from you, I conſulted indirectly, is of opinion, that with perſons of naturally an active diſpoſition, this kind of ſudden apathy ſhould by no means be neglect-

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ed. He told me, moreover, disorders will not give way to remedies, when they have been neglected in the beginning. Why then run such a hazard with one so dear to you?

It adds greatly to my uneasiness, I have not had any news of him these four days. Good God! I beg you will not deceive me on his state! Why is it he has left off writing to me so suddenly? If it was only the effect of my obstinacy in returning his letters, I believe he would have taken the resolution sooner. Without having, however, any faith in forebodings, for these few days I have been in a most melancholy situation. I fear I am on the eve of some great misfortune. You cannot imagine, and I am ashamed to tell you, how much I regret not receiving those letters which I refused to read. I was certain he at least thought of me, and saw something that came from his hands. I did not

 open

open them, but I wept over them: my tears were softer, and flowed with more ease; they only partly dissipated the habitual oppression I experience since my return. I conjure you, my most respectable friend, to write to me yourself as soon as you can; in the mean time, pray indulge me every day in hearing from you, and of him.

I now perceive, I have scarcely said a word to you: but you know my sentiments, my unreserved attachment, my tender gratitude, for your sincere friendship. You will forgive my distress, my painful anguish, for dreading evils of which I am, perhaps, the cause. Merciful God! this desponding idea pursues me and wrings my heart. This misfortune only was wanting. I know I am born to experience them all.

Adieu, my dear friend! love me, pity me. Shall I hear from you this day?

Paris, Oct. 16, 17—.

LETTER CXV.

The Viscount de VALMONT *to the Marchioness de* MERTEUIL.

IT is a most unaccountable thing, my charming friend, when we are at a remote distance, we cannot so readily understand each other. Whilst I was near you, we always had the same sentiments, and viewed every object in the same light; because I am now about three months absent, we are no longer of the same opinion on any thing. Which of us is in the wrong? You certainly will not hesitate in your answer: but I, more wise, or more polite, will not decide. I shall only reply to your letter, and continue to lay my conduct open.

First, accept my thanks for the intelligence of the reports flying about me;

me; that does not make me uneasy: I think soon I shall be furnished with materials to silence them all. Have a little patience; I shall again appear more celebrated than ever, and more worthy of you.

I expect even they will give me credit for the affair of the little Volanges, which you affect to treat as such a trifle: as if there was no merit in carrying in one night a young girl from a favoured lover; to make use of her after as much as one chuses, even as their own property, and without any farther trouble; to obtain from her what one dare not even require from girls whose vocation it is; and all this without in the least disturbing her tender affection; without making her inconstant, or even false; for certainly I don't engage her imagination. So that after my fancy is at an end, I will deliver her into her lover's arms, without, as I may say,

her having taken notice of any thing. Pray is that so common an exploit? Yet believe, when she is gone from under my tuition, the principles I have instilled into her will neverthe-less display themselves; and I prophesy, the timid scholar will take a flight that will do honour to her master.

If, however, they like heroicks better, I will show my Presidente; this model cited for every virtue, respected even by our greatest libertines; insomuch, they had given up the idea of attacking her. I will shew her, forgetting duty and virtue; sacrificing her reputation and two years prudence to run after the happiness of pleasing me; intoxicated with love; sufficiently recompensed for so many sacrifices by a word, a look, which yet she will not always obtain. I will do more, I will even abandon her; and if I know this woman, I shall

not have a successor; she will resist the necessity of consolation; the habitude of pleasure; even the thirst for revenge: she shall have existed for me only; and let her career be long or short, I alone will have openeda nd shut the barrier; when once I rise to this triumph, I will tell my rivals, "that is my exploit, search the world for such an example."

You ask me whence proceeds this excessive confidence? Why, for eight days past, I am my fair one's confidant; she does not tell me her secrets, but I come at them; two of her letters have given me sufficient information; the rest I will only read out of curiosity. I now absolutely want nothing to crown my success but admittance, my measures are taken; I shall immediately execute them. I think you are curious; but to punish you for not believing my intentions, you shall not know them; you really in

earnest deserve I should withdraw my confidence from you, at least, for this adventure; were it not for the tender reward you have attached to its success, I would not mention it again. You see I am vexed; however, in hopes of your amendment, I will be satisfied with this slight reprimand, and my indulgent mind for a moment, forgetting my grand project, shall employ itself on yours.

You are then in the country, dull as sentiment, and sorrowful as fidelity; and poor Belleroche, not satisfied with making him drink the waters of oblivion, you will also put him to the torture; how does he like it? Does he bear the nausea of love well? I would rather than a great deal he should become more attached to you; I am curious to learn what more efficacious remedy you would use; I really pity you, to have been obliged to have recourse to that. Never did I make love but once methodically;

I certainly had a strong motive, as it was with the Countess de ——; and twenty times in her arms have I been tempted to tell her, "Madam, I re-"nounce the place I solicit, and per-"mit me to quit that I occupy." Of all the women I have had, she is the only one of whom I take pleasure in speaking ill. Your motive, I must own, is truly ridiculous, and you was right in thinking I should not guess the successor:—What, then, is it for Danceny you have taken all this trouble? Ah, my dear friend, let him alone to adore *his virtuous Cecilia*, and do not commit yourself in this children's play; leave the scholars to be formed by good old women, or play with the pensioners at pretty innocent games. What, would you instruct a novice who neither knows how to take or leave you, for whom you must do every thing? I tell you seriously, I disapprove your choice; and let it be

ever

even so secret, it will humble you in my mind, and your own conscience. You say you have taken a great liking to him; for shame! you certainly deceive yourself. I think I have discovered the cause of your error; this fine disgust for Belleroche happened at a time of scarcity, and Paris not offering any choice, your lively ideas fixed on the first object they met; but remember, at your return you may chuse among a thousand; and if you dread the inaction you risk falling into in deferring your choice, I offer myself for your amusement at your leisure hours. From this time until your arrival, my great affairs will be determined one way or other; certainly neither the little Volanges, nor the Presidente even, will employ me so much, but I may devote myself to you as much as you wish; perhaps even before that time, I may have delivered the little one into the hands of

her discreet lover. Say what you please, which I don't agree to, that it is not an *attaching* enjoyment, as I intended she should ever retain an idea of me superior to all the rest of mankind, I assumed such a tone with her as I could not support long without prejudice to my health; and from this moment I am no longer hers only for family duty. You don't understand me; I mean I wait a second period to confirm my hopes, and give me full assurance I have amply succeeded in my scheme. Yes, my dear friend, I have already a first indication that my scholar's husband will not die without posterity, and the chief of the house of Gercourt will be a younger brother of that of Valmont. But let me finish to my own liking this business which I undertook at your request: remember if you make Danceny inconstant, you deprive the adventure of its poignancy. Consider

also, in offering myself to you, I have a right to a preference.

I depend so much upon it, I was not afraid to counteract your designs in even assisting to increase the tender passion of the discreet lover, for the first and worthy object of his choice. Having yesterday found your pupil writing to him, and disturbed her in this pleasing task, for another still more pleasing: I afterwards desired to see the letter; as it was too cold and constrained, I made her sensible it was not thus she should console her lover, and made her write another which I dictated; where, imitating her nonsense as well as I could, I endeavoured to feed the young man's passion by more certain hopes; the little creature was overjoyed, she said, to find she wrote so well, and hereafter I should hold the correspondence. What have I not done for this Danceny! I have been at once his friend, his

his confidant, his rival, and his mistress; even at this instant, I am endeavouring to save him from your dangerous toils: ay, dangerous; for to possess, and then lose you, is purchasing a moment's happiness with an eternity of regret.

Adieu, my lovely friend! muster up resolution to dispatch Belleroche as soon as possible; think no more of Danceny; and prepare to again find and return me the delicious pleasures of our first connection.

Oct. 19, 17.—

P. S. I congratulate you on the approaching decision of your great cause; I should be very happy this event should occur during my reign.

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LETTER CXVI.

Chevalier DANCENY *to* CECILIA VOLANGES.

MADAME de Merteuil set out this morning for the country; thus am I deprived, my charming Cecilia, of my only remaining consolation in your absence, of conversing of you with our mutual friend: she has given me leave for some time past to distinguish her by that title; I accepted it the more eagerly, as it has something the appearance of drawing me nearer to you; she is a most amiable woman, and knows how to add the most attractive charms to friendship: — It would seem as if this pleasing sensation was embellished and strengthened in her the more, for what she

ſhe refuſes to love. You cannot imagine how much ſhe loves you; how pleaſed ſhe is to hear me ſpeak of you: it is this certainly that attaches me ſo much to her. What happineſs, to exiſt only for you both! to make ſuch ſudden tranſitions from the ecſtaſy of love, to the charms of friendſhip; to devote my life to it; to be in ſome meaſure the point of re-union to your reciprocal attachment; to be convinced the happineſs of the one is alſo that of the other.

You cannot, my charming Cecilia, love this adorable woman too much: add to my attachment for her, by ſharing it with me. Now I experience the charms of friendſhip, I wiſh you alſo to taſte them; I think no enjoyment complete you do not partake of: Yes, my dear Cecilia, I wiſh to inſpire you with all the tender ſentiments, that every idea ſhould convey happineſs to you; and would ſtill think I returned

you only a portion of the felicity I have received from you.

Alas! those enchanting dreams are only the pleasing fancies of imagination, and reality only offers me mortifying privations. I now plainly see I must give up the flattering hope of seeing you in the country: my sole consolation is endeavouring to be persuaded you cannot accomplish it, and you do not chuse to afflict me more by informing me of it; twice already have I lamented this disappointment, and received no reply:—Ah! Cecilia, I really believe you love me with your whole soul, but your heart is not so ardent as mine. If the obstacles were left to me to be removed, or my own interests to be managed instead of yours, I would soon convince you nothing was impossible to love. You do not inform me even when this cruel absence is to be at an end: here surely I can see you; your enchanting

looks

looks would revive my ſorrowful heart which is almoſt totally depreſſed: forgive, my dear Cecilia, my fears, they are not ſuſpicious; I place implicit faith in your love, in your conſtancy; I ſhould be too miſerable, had I any doubts; but ſo many obſtacles ſtill renewed—I am, my dear, very much dejected:—Madame de Merteuil's departure has renewed all my ſorrows.

Adieu, my dear Cecilia, adieu!—Remember your lover is in affliction, and you only can make him happy.

Paris, Oct. 17, 17.—

LET-

LETTER CXVII.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to the Chevalier* DANCENY.

(Dictated by Valmont.)

DO you think my dear friend there is any neceffity to be angry with me to make me melancholy, when I know you to be in affliction; and do you think I have not my fhare of fufferings as well as you? I even partake of thofe I am obliged to give you; and ftill you are unjuft. I fee plainly what puts you out of temper; it is becaufe I was filent to the two requifitions you made to me here; do you think an anfwer to it is fo eafy to give? Do you think I do not know what you want is not right? And if I am fo diftreffed

diſtreſſed to refuſe you at ſuch a diſtance, how would it be if you was here? Then again I muſt be afflicted all my life for giving you a moments conſolation.

I hide nothing from you, I give you my reaſons, you may judge for yourſelf; I ſhould perhaps have done what you wiſh, had it not been for what I wrote you, that M. de Gercourt, who is the cauſe of all our trouble, will not come ſo ſoon; and as mama is greatly pleaſed with me now, I careſs her as much as poſſible; who knows what I may bring her to; if we could be happy without having any thing to reproach myſelf with, ſurely it would be much better. If I am to believe what I have often heard, that men, when they have loved their wives before marriage, do not love them ſo much after; the dread of that reſtrains me more than any thing;—Are you not

not ſure of my heart, and will there not be always time enough.

I promiſe you, if I cannot avoid marrying M. de Gercourt, who I already hate without knowing him, nothing ſhall prevent me from being yours as much as I can, even before any thing, as I do not mind being loved by any but you: — you will ſee if I act wrong it ſhall not be my fault; the reſt is indifferent to me, provided you promiſe to love me always as much as you do now: — but until then let me be as I am; and do not aſk a thing I have good reaſons not to do, and am vexed to refuſe you.

I would likewiſe be very glad M. de Valmont would not be ſo preſſing on your account, which only makes me more unhappy: he is your very good friend I aſſure you; he does every thing as you would do yourſelf; but adieu, my dear friend! it was when I began

began to write, and ſpent a good part of the night at it. I am going to bed to retrieve the time I loſt. I embrace you; but do not ſcold me any more.

Caſtle of ——,
Oct. 18, 17—.

LETTER CXVIII.

Chevalier DANCENY *to the Marchioneſs de* MERTEUIL.

IF I am to credit my almanack, my charming friend, you are abſent only two days; but my heart tells me it is an age. According to your own doctrine then, the heart muſt always be believed. It is time you ſhould return: ſurely your affairs ſhould be finiſhed by this time. How can I be any way concerned in the ſucceſs of your law ſuit, as I muſt ſuffer by your abſence?

absence? I am now much inclined to scold; and it is really hard, being so ripe for bad humour, I dare not give way to it.

Is it not a species of infidelity, to leave your friend, after having accustomed him not to be able to exist out of your presence? Your lawyers will even find it difficult to defend so bad a cause: besides, those gentlemen generally make use of arguments which are not valid answers to sentiments.

You have given me so many for this journey, that I am sick of them, and will pay no farther attention to them, were they even to persuade me to forget you. Yet that would not be so unreasonable, nor so difficult, as you may imagine: it would be only laying aside the habit of always thinking of you; for nothing here, I can assure you, would ever recall you to my memory.

Our

Our prettiest women, those even called the most amiable, are so inferior to you, that they could give but a very faint idea indeed. I even think, that, with all their practised looks, the more one might at first think that they resembled you, the more striking the difference would afterwards appear. In vain do they use their utmost exertions; they always fail being you; and that precisely constitutes the charm. Unfortunately, when the days are so long, and one is unoccupied, reveries, ideal projects, and chimeras, fill the brain; the mind acquires a degree of elevation. We are intent on ornamenting our productions; we collect together every thing that can please; we arrive at length at perfection; and when we are there, the portrait brings us back to the original, and one is quite astonished to see that you were the only object of all these turns of

the mind. Even at this moment I am the dupe of pretty much the same sort of error. You fancy, perhaps, that it was in order to employ myself on your subject, that I resolved to write to you—not at all: it was in order to direct my attention a little from you. I have a hundred things to tell you, of which you were not the object, and which, nevertheless, you very well know concern me nearly; and yet it is from these things my attention is led away. Since when, then, do the charms of Friendship dissipate those of Love? If I considered it narrowly, perhaps I should have to reproach myself—but hush! Let us forget that small fault, lest we relapse into it; and let even my best female friend be in ignorance of it.

Why are you absent? Why not here to give me an answer? To recall me if I should stray? To talk to me of

of my Cecilia? To add, if poſſible, to the happineſs I experience in loving her, by the additionally charming idea that it is your friend I love? Yes, I avow the love ſhe inſpires me, is become more precious. Since you have been kind enough to become the confidant of it, I feel ſo great a pleaſure in opening my heart to you, in intereſting yours in my ſentiments, in depoſiting them there without reſerve! I think them the more dear to me in proportion as you condeſcend to hear them; that I look at you, and ſay to myſelf, It is in her that all my happineſs is centered. I have nothing new to inform you of as to my ſituation. The laſt letter I received from her increaſes, and gives a degree of ſecurity to my hopes; though ſhe ſtill brings a delay to them, yet her motives are ſo tender and honourable, that I can neither blame her, nor complain of

it. Perhaps this is obſcure to you; but why are you not here? Though we can ſay every thing to a friend, every thing cannot be written. The ſecrets of love eſpecially, are ſo delicate, that one ought not to let them go in that way, relying on honour. If they are ſometimes permitted to go abroad, they never ſhould be permitted to go out of ſight; they ought even to be watched back to their new aſylum. Return, then, my adorable friend; you ſee your return is neceſſary: forget, then, the *thouſand reaſons* that detain you where you are, or teach me to live where you are not.

I have the honour to be, &c.

Paris, Oct. 16, 17—.

LETTER CXIX.

Madame de ROSEMONDE *to the Presidente de* TOURVEL.

ALTHOUGH, still suffering much pain, my lovely dear, I endeavour to write to you myself, in order to tell you what interests you so much. My nephew still preserves his misanthrophy: he sends every day regularly to enquire about my health; but has never come once in person, although I requested it; so that we see no more of him than if he was at Paris. This morning, however, I met him, when least expected: it was in my chapel, where I came down for the first time since my painful disorder. They inform me, for four days past he goes there

regularly every morning to maſs. God grant it may laſt.

When I entered, he congratulated me very affectionately on my recovery. As maſs was beginning, we broke off the converſation, expecting to renew it afterwards: he diſappeared before I could join him again. I will not conceal from you, he is ſomething altered; but, my lovely dear, do not make me repent my confidence in your good ſenſe, by your too great uneaſineſs; and be aſſured I would rather afflict than deceive you.

If my nephew continues to treat me ſo ſeverely, I am reſolved, when I am ſomething better, to viſit him in his chamber, and endeavour to dive into the cauſe of this extraordinary madneſs, in which you certainly have ſome ſhare. The reſult of my obſervations you ſhall be informed. I muſt leave off, not being able to ſtir my

my fingers. If Adelaide knew I had been writing, she would be very much vexed. Adieu, my lovely dear!

Castle of ——,
Oct. 20, 17—.

LETTER CXX.

Viscount de VALMONT *to Father* ANSELMUS,

(Of the Feuillant Convent, St. Honoré Street.)

NOT having the honour of being known to you, Sir, but thoroughly acquainted with the well-placed confidence Madame the Presidente de Tourvel reposes in you, I think I may address myself to you without being guilty of indiscretion, to obtain an essential piece of service, truly worthy your holy ministry, wherein Ma-

 dame

dame de Tourvel's advantage is equally concerned with mine.

Having in my possession some papers of consequence that concern her nearly, and should not be entrusted to any person, which I neither ought or will deliver but into her own hands. Being deprived of the means of informing her of this resolution, for reasons which you may probably have learned from her, but which I do not think myself at liberty to acquaint you with, she determined to refuse corresponding with me; a determination which I do not now in the least blame, as she could not foresee events, so unexpected, and which required the supernatural power, that one is forced to acknowledge for their completion. Therefore I request, Sir, you will be so good to inform her of my new resolves, and ask, in my name, a particular interview, where I may in some measure repair the injuries I

 have

have been guilty of by my apologies; and, as the last sacrifice, annihilate, in her presence, the only remaining impressions of an error or crime, which made me culpable towards her.

It cannot be until after this preliminary expiation, I shall dare, at your knees, make the humiliating avowal of my long bad conduct, and implore your mediation, for a still more important, and, unhappily, a much more difficult reconciliation. May I hope, Sir, you will not refuse me your assistance in a business so necessary and so important; and that you will vouchsafe to aid my weakness, and guide my steps in this new path, which I ardently wish to follow, and to which, with shame, I own myself an utter stranger.

I wait your answer with the impatience of repentance that wishes to reform; and beg you will believe me

to be, with as much gratitude as veneration,

Your most humble, &c.

P. S. I authorise you, Sir, if you think proper, to communicate this letter entirely to Madame de Tourvel, who I shall make it my duty to respect during the rest of my days, and whom I shall never cease to revere, as the instrument heaven has been pleased to use to bring me back to virtue, by the striking example of her own.

Castle of ———,
Oct. 22, 17—.

LET-

LETTER CXXI.

The Marchioness de MERTEUIL *to Chevalier* DANCENY.

I Received your letter, my very young friend, and must scold you before you receive my thanks for it; farther I warn you, if you do not amend, you shall not have any answer from me. Leave, then, that wheedling stile, which is but mere cant, when it is not the expression of love. Is it the stile of friendship? No, my dear friend; each sentiment has its peculiar language suitable to it; and to use another, is to disguise the thought we should express. I am well aware our silly women do not understand what is said to them, unless it is translated in some shape into this fashionable nonsense: but I imagined

gined you would have diſtinguiſhed me from them. I am really hurt, and, perhaps, more than I ought, you ſhould imbibe ſuch an opinion of me.

You will find in my letter what is wanting in yours, frankneſs and ſimplicity. As I ſhall ſay, it would give me infinite pleaſure to ſee you, and am grieved to have only thoſe about me who ſtupify me inſtead of thoſe that give me pleaſure; but you tranſlate this ſame phraſe thus: *Teach me to live where you are abſent*; thus, ſuppoſe you was with your miſtreſs, you could not live was I abſent. What a misfortune! And theſe women *that always fail being me!* You will find, perhaps, that wanting alſo to your Cecilia! This, however, is the ſtile which, by the abuſe now made of it, is beneath the nonſenſe of compliment, and becomes a mere precedent,

to which no more attention is paid than to your most humble servant.

My dear friend, when you write to me, let it be to express your thoughts and feelings, and do not stuff your letter with phrases, which I shall find, without your assistance, well or ill told in the first romance of the day. I hope you will not be displeased at what I now say, if even you should discover some peevishness in it; for it must not be denied I am a little so at present. To avoid even the shadow of the defect with which I reproach you, you must not be told, perhaps, this peevishness is not a little increased by the distance I am from you. And I am inclined to think, all things considered, you are more eligible than a law suit and two lawyers, and, perhaps, even the *attentive* Belleroche.

Observe, instead of being afflicted at my absence, you should be highly gratified;

gratified; for I never before paid you so handsome a compliment. Your example influences me; I shall be apt to wheedle. No; I will retain my sincerity; it alone assures you of my tender friendship, and the interesting things it inspires. Is it not very pleasing to have a young friend, whose inclinations lead him elsewhere? However, that is not the system of the generality of women, but it is mine. I always thought the pleasure greater, and more satisfactory, in a sentiment where there is no apprehension. Don't you think I have assumed the character of confidant for you tolerably soon: but you chuse your mistress so young, that, for the first time, I begin to think I grow old. You are certainly right, thus to prepare yourself for a long career of constancy; and I sincerely wish it may be reciprocal.

You

You do right to cherish the *tender and honourable motives,* which you say *retard your hopes.* A long defence is the only merit of those who do not always resist: and I should think it unpardonable in any other but a child, like the little Volanges, not to fly a danger, of which she has had sufficient warning by the confession she made of her love. You men have no idea of virtue, and what the sacrifice of it costs a woman; but if she is capable of reasoning, she should know, that independent of the fault she commits, a single weakness is one of the greatest misfortunes; and I cannot conceive how any can fall, if they have a moment for reflection.

Do not attempt to combat this idea: it principally attaches me to you. You will save me from the dangers of love; and although I have hitherto guarded myself against them without your assistance, yet I consent to be grateful,

and

and ſhall love you more and the better for it.

On which, my dear chevalier, I pray God to have you in his holy keeping.

Caſtle of —,
Oct. 22, 17—.

LETTER CXXII.

Madame de ROSEMONDE *to the Preſidente de* TOURVEL.

I Flattered myſelf, my lovely daughter, to have been able to calm your uneaſineſs; with grief, however, I am forced ſtill to increaſe it; yet be pacified, my nephew is not in any dangerous way. I cannot even ſay he is really ſick. Still there is ſomething very extraordinary in his diſorder, which is incomprehenſible. I

left

left his chamber with sensations of grief, and even of terror, which I blame myself for imparting to you, and still cannot conceal. I will give you an account of the transaction. You may depend on its veracity. Were I to live eighty years more, I should never forget this melancholy scene.

I went this morning to see my nephew. He was writing, surrounded with a heap of papers, which appeared to be the object of his employment. He was so deeply engaged, I was in the middle of the room before he looked about to see who came in. As soon as he perceived me, I observed, as he rose, he endeavoured to compose his countenance, and perhaps it was that made me pay more attention to it. He was undressed, and without powder; but his countenance pale, wan, and very much altered; his look, which used to be

so

ſo gay and lively, was melancholy and dejected: and, between ourſelves, I would not for any conſideration you had ſeen him thus, for his whole deportment was very affecting, and the moſt apt to inſpire that tender compaſſion, which is one of the moſt dangerous ſnares of love.

Although ſtruck with thoſe remarks, yet I began a converſation as if I had not taken notice of any thing. Firſt, I enquired about his health; and without ſaying it was very good, he did not complain of it's being bad. I then began to lament his recluſeneſs, which had ſomething the appearance of a diſordered fancy, and endeavoured to mingle a little ſprightlineſs with my reprimand: but he replied in an affecting tone; "I confeſs it is another error, which "ſhall be repaired with the reſt." His looks more than his reply, diſconcerted my chearfulneſs; and I told him,

him, he took up a little friendly reproach in too ſerious a manner.

We then began to chat on indifferent matters. A little while after he told me, an affair, *the greateſt affair of his whole life*, would, perhaps, ſoon call him back to Paris. I was afraid to gueſs at it, my lovely dear; and leſt this beginning ſhould lead to a confidence I did not wiſh, aſked him no queſtions, but only replied, a little diſſipation might put him in better health; ſaying, at this time I would not preſs him, as loving my friends for their own ſake. At this ſo ſimple a ſpeech, he ſqueezed my hands, and with a vehemence I can't expreſs, "Yes, my dear aunt," ſaid he, "love "a nephew who reſpects and cheriſhes you, and, as you ſay, love "him for his own ſake. Do not be "afflicted at his happineſs, and do "not diſturb with any ſorrow, the "eternal tranquillity he ſoon hopes

"to

"to enjoy. Repeat once more, you
"love me, you forgive me; yes, you
"will forgive me; I know the good-
"ness of your heart: but can I hope
"for the same indulgence from those
"I have so grievously offended?"
Then leaned down towards me, as I believe to conceal some marks of grief, which, however, the tone of his voice betrayed.

Inexpressibly affected, I rose suddenly; and he, no doubt, observed my affright, for instantly composing himself, he replied, "Your pardon,
"Madam, I perceive I am wander-
"ing in spite of me. I beg you will
"remember my profound respect,
"and forget my expressions. I shall
"not omit waiting on you before my
"departure to renew them." This last sentence seemed to imply a wish, I should terminate my visit; I accordly retired.

I am

I am lost in reflection, as to his meaning. What can this affair be, *the greatest of his whole life?* On what account should he ask my pardon? From whence could that involuntary melting proceed whilst he was speaking? I have since put myself those questions a thousand times, without being able to solve them. I can't even discover any thing relative to you; yet, as the eyes of love are more penetrating than those of friendship, I would not conceal any thing from you that passed between my nephew and me.

This is the fourth time I have sat down to write this long letter, which I should yet have made longer, but for the fatigue I undergo. Adieu, my lovely dear!

Castle of ——,
Oct. 25, 17—.

LETTER CXXIII.

Father ANSELMUS *to the Viscount de* VALMONT.

I Received, Monsieur Viscount, the letter you did me the honour to write to me, and yesterday, as you requested, waited on the person mentioned. I laid before her the motives and intentions that induced you to this measure. Although very determined to pursue the prudent resolution she at first took, yet on the remonstrances I made, that by a refusal she might incur the danger of throwing an obstacle in the way of your conversion, and in a manner oppose the designs of all-merciful Providence, she consented to receive your visit, on condition, nevertheless, it shall be the last; and

has

has desired me to inform you, she should be at home on Thursday next, the 28th. If this day should not be convenient for you, please to inform her, and appoint some other; your letter will be received.

Give me leave to recommend to you, Sir, to avoid delays, unless for very cogent reasons, that you may as soon as possible give yourself up entirely to the laudable dispositions you express. Remember, whoever is silent to the calls of divine grace, exposes himself to have it withdrawn; that if the divine bounty is infinite, the dispensation of it is regulated by justice; and the time may come, when the God of mercy may be changed to a God of vengeance.

If you continue to honour me with your confidence, be assured all my care shall be devoted to you the instant you require it. Let my business be ever so great, the most important

shall ever be to fulfil the duties of the holy ministry, to which I am particularly devoted; and the most valuable part of my life, that wherein I see my weak endeavours crowned with the benediction of the Most High. We are weak sinners, and cannot do any thing of ourselves! but the God that now calls you is omnipotent; and we shall equally owe to his goodness; you the desire of being reunited to him, and I the means of conducting you. It is with his divine assistance, I hope soon to convince you, that religion only can give even in this world that solid and durable happiness, which is vainly sought in the blindness of human passions. I have the honour to be, with great respect, &c.

Paris, Oct. 25, 17—.

LET-

LETTER CXXIV.

The Presidente de TOURVEL *to Madame de* ROSEMONDE.

THE astonishment in which I am thrown, Madam, at the news I received yesterday, will not, however, make me forget the satisfaction it ought to give you, therefore I am in haste to impart it. M. de Valmont's thoughts are no longer taken up with me or his love; he wishes nothing more ardently, than to repair, by a more edifying life, the faults, or rather the errors of his youth. This great event was announced to me by Father Anselmus, whom he addressed to be his director in future, and to treat with me of an interview, the principal design of which is, I imagine,

gine, to return my letters, which he has kept hitherto, notwithſtanding my requiſitions.

I cannot undoubtedly but applaud this happy change, and congratulate myſelf, if, as he ſays, I have any way contributed to it. But why ſhould I have been the inſtrument, and that at the expence of my repoſe for life? Could not M. de Valmont's happineſs be completed but by my misfortune? Oh! forgive me this complaint, my moſt indulgent friend! I know it does not belong to mortals to fathom the decrees of heaven. Whilſt I am inceſſantly and vainly imploring ſtrength to overcome my unfortunate paſſion, it is prodigal of its favour to him who does not ſue for it, and leaves me helpleſs a prey to my weakneſs.

Let me ſtifle thoſe guilty murmurs. Did not the prodigal ſon at his return, find more grace with his father, than the one who never had been abſent?

What

What account can we demand of him who owes us nothing? And were it possible we could have any pretensions in the sight of God, what could mine be? Should I boast of a modesty, for which I am only indebted to Valmont? It was he saved me; and shall I dare complain of suffering for him? No; my sufferings shall be dear to me, if his happiness is purchased at their expence. Doubtless, in his turn he should come back to our common father. The almighty hand that formed him should cherish its own work. He did not create that charming being to be reprobated. It is me should bear the pain of my daring imprudence. Should I not have reflected, since I was forbid loving him, I should not indulge myself in gazing on him.

My fault or misfortune is to have rejected this truth too long. You, my dear and worthy friend, will be

my witness, I submitted to this sacrifice as soon as I discovered the necessity of it: but to render it compleat, there wanted the circumstance of M. de Valmont not taking any share in it. Shall I confess to you, this is the idea that at present torments me most? Intollerable pride! which alleviates the evils we endure, by a consciousness of those woes we cause to others! But I will conquer this rebellious heart. I will accustom it to humiliation.

This motive exclusive of all other considerations, made me at last consent to receive next Thursday, M. de Valmont's painful visit;—he will then tell me he no longer knows me; that the feeble, transitory impression I had made on him exists, no longer! He will look upon me without any emotion, whilst the dread of revealing mine will cast my eyes down. Even those very letters which he so long refused

fused to my repeated solicitations, I shall receive from his indifference; he will return them as useless trifles he no longer cares for; and my trembling hand will receive this shameful trust from a tranquil steady one; last he will depart!—Depart for ever!—My eyes which will follow him, will not see his return to me.

Am I then reserved for all this humiliation? Let me at least make it useful by being penetrated with a sense of my weakness.—Those letters he will no longer keep, I will lay up with care:—I will impose on myself the shame of daily reading them until my tears have defaced the last letter—and his, I will destroy, as infected with the dangerous poison which has tainted my soul.—What then is love, which makes us regret even the danger it exposes us to, and dread feeling it, even when we can no longer inspire it? Let me fly this destructive

tive passion, which leaves no choice between shame and misery, and often reunites them: — let prudence then replace virtue.

How distant is this Thursday still! Why can't I instantly consummate this sorrowful sacrifice, and forget at once the cause and the object? This visit importunes me; I repent having promised it — what occasion to see me again — what are we now to each other? If he has offended me, I forgive him — I even congratulate him on his reformation; I praise him for it; I do more, I will follow his example; and, seduced by the same errors, his example shall reform me. But why, when his resolution is to fly me, why begin by seeking me? The one that is in most danger, ought they not to forget the other? Doubtless they ought; and that shall hereafter be my sole care.

With

With your permission, my amiable friend, it shall be with you I will undertake this difficult task; if I should want assistance, or perhaps consolation, I will not receive it from any other — you alone understand and can speak to my heart: — Your endearing friendship will fill up my existence; — nothing will be difficult to second your cares: — I shall be indebted to you for my tranquillity, my happiness, my virtue; and the fruits of your goodness will be to have at length made made me deserving of it.

I believe I have gone very much astray in this letter, at least I think so, from the perturbed state I have been in during the whole time: — If there is a sentiment which ought to make me blush, cover it with your indulgent friendship; I submit entirely to it; I have not a wish to hide from you any emotion of my heart.

Adieu,

Adieu, my most respectable friend! I hope to be able in a few days to announce that of my arrival.

Paris, Oct. 25, 17—.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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